

# **Study on the Social Impact of ICT**

(CPP N° 55A – SMART N° 2007/0068)

## **Participation in Public Policy Making**

**Second Draft Complete Report, June 2009**

**University of Twente**

**Prof. Dr. Jan A.G.M van Dijk**



# Participation in Policy Making

University of Twente

## Table of contents:

1	INTRODUCTION .....	2
2	EPOCHAL TRENDS AND THE ARRIVAL OF ICTS IN THE DOMAIN .....	4
2.1	EPOCHAL TRENDS: THE PARTICIPATION OF INFORMED CITIZENS IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY .....	4
2.2	THE ARRIVAL OF ICTS AND THE OPPORTUNITIES OF E-PARTICIPATION .....	5
3	APPLICATIONS OF ICT IN THE DOMAIN .....	12
3.1	INTRODUCTION.....	12
3.2	AGENDA SETTING .....	14
3.3	POLICY PREPARATION .....	14
3.4	DECISION MAKING .....	18
3.5	POLICY EXECUTION.....	19
3.6	POLICY EVALUATION .....	21
3.7	USAGE FREQUENCIES OF E-PARTICIPATION APPLICATIONS IN EUROPE .....	21
4	SOCIAL IMPACT ANALYSIS .....	23
4.1.1	<i>Effectiveness and efficiency</i> .....	25
4.1.2	<i>Information: better informed policies?</i> .....	29
4.1.3	<i>Trust, transparency and openness</i> .....	31
4.1.4	<i>Efficiency: faster and cheaper policy making?</i> .....	32
4.2	NETWORKING.....	33
4.3	EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION .....	34
4.4	SOCIAL CAPITAL .....	35
4.5	INFORMATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING .....	35
5	CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS.....	36
5.1	CONCLUSIONS .....	36
5.2	POLICY SUGGESTIONS .....	40
8.	LITERATURE.....	42
	APPENDICES .....	47

# 1 Introduction

This domain report makes an inventory of the impact of ICT on public policy making in contemporary European societies. This issue is known as e-Participation. However, this is a very broad concept that can be applied to the participation of people in all kinds of domains in society both public and private. Participators could be workers or employees in labour organizations, patients in health care, students and teachers in educational institutions and audiences in the media. This report focuses on citizens that participate in public life that is under the influence of governments and that try to shape this part of public life using tools of ICT, particularly Internet applications.

This focus is still too broad. Meijer and Bekkers<sup>1</sup> have distinguished between political participation, policy participation and social participation. This domain report will be about policy participation and it will frequently also refer to political participation. Social participation that focuses on building social capital building in social networking and communities will be discussed in the domain report about the Community and the Family. In the domain report you are reading participators will be called citizens and the venues in which they participate - that range from elections and consultations to the use of public services- can be both offered by governments and their civil servants or by citizens themselves. All have public goals, some have political goals.

Policy participation is defined here as *taking part in public affairs by both governments and citizens trying to shape these affairs in a particular phase of institutional policy processes, from agenda setting through policy evaluation*. Traditionally, participation in public policy processes shaped by governments is approached with a government-centric view. This means that all initiative to invite and pressure citizens to take part in policy processes came from governments and institutional political parties. More or less autonomous initiatives and actions from individual and collective citizens to influence public affairs or governments have not acquired much attention from politicians, civil servants or social and political scientists.

This also goes for e-Participation<sup>2</sup>. Until recently, most initiatives in e-Participation came from government employees and politicians trying to involve the citizenry in public and political affairs with applications of ICT, mostly Internet applications. In the last five years a significant change has occurred. Now citizens themselves can take the initiative to influence public and political affairs with freely available new Internet applications. Most of them are known under the labels of Web 2.0 and so-called user-generated content. In this report the government centric view of e-Participation will be exchanged for a two-sided government and citizens view. Both government and citizen initiated applications will be discussed.

According to Sæbø, Rose and Skiftenes Flak<sup>3</sup> “governments may seek to promote participation in order to improve the efficiency, acceptance and legitimacy of political processes. Citizens, non-governmental organizations, lobbyists, and pressure groups may demand participation to promote their own interests, either within the established political system or outside it through activism and opinion forming. “

In conclusion, the following picture emerges as the domain of e-Participation in policy making by citizens and their organizations, governments and politicians and public administrations and their services. E-Participation can be defined as *the use of ICTs to mediate and transform the relations of citizens to governments and to public administrations in the direction of more participation by citizens*. The issues at stake are not only political issues in

---

<sup>1</sup> A. Meijer and V. Bekkers (in press). Citizens2Citizens, Mapping participatory practices on the Internet. *Electronic Journal of e-Government*, Vol. 6 (2009).

<sup>2</sup> See a.o. A. Macintosh (2007). E-Democracy and e-Participation Research in Europe. In: H. Chen, L. Brandt, V. Gregg and W. Traummüller (eds.) *Digital Government*. New York: Springer.

<sup>3</sup> O. Sæbø, J. Rose and L. Skiftenes Flak (2008). The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area. *Government Information Quarterly* 25, 400-428.

the broadest sense, but also public service issues that shape the day-to-day relationships between citizens and the state at large. Relations between governments and public administrations belong to the internal dimension of e-Government. Figure 1 shows these relationships.

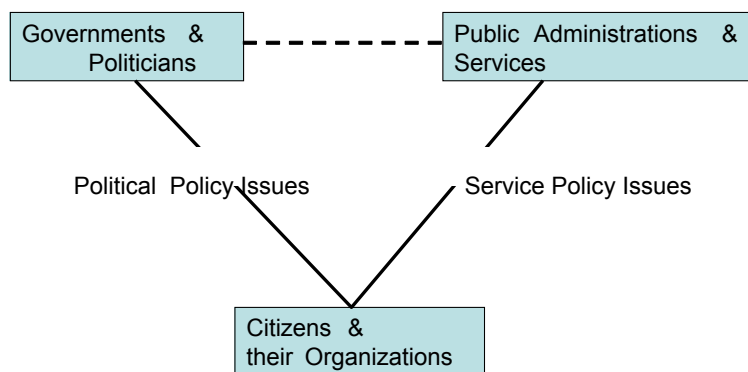


Figure 1 Relations and Issues of E-participation on Policy Making

Before the extensive treatment of applications of e-Participation in section 4 of this report two sections will follow. First we will describe the rise of attention for e-Participation against the backdrop of much longer existing societal trends of civic participation. This goes in line with the approach of the Conceptual Framework. Part of the matter is not new at all and the opportunities of electronic venues of participation have to be compared against comparable older ones and related to the current needs and capacities of citizens.

The ensuing section 2 will describe the advent of ICT in this domain during the 1980s. Further, it will give an historical overview of the expectations of the opportunities and threats of ICT tools in policy participation by governments and citizens developed from the 1980s to the present. Here we will also summarize six general views of democracy that usually hide behind these expectations. Particular views of democracy happen to be more in favour of some applications of e-Participation while other views back other applications.

The long empirical section 3 will give an overview of the characteristics, the use and the expectations regarding the most important applications of e-Participation in policy making. They will be arranged in the framework of the general phases of the policy process: 1. agenda setting, 2. policy preparation, 3. decision making, 4. policy execution and 5. policy evaluation. In every phase both government initiated applications and citizen initiated applications will be described.

In section 4 the common themes for all domain reports announced in the Conceptual Framework will be addressed. In the domain of participation in policy making we also have rationalization (effective policy making), networking (peer-to-peer networking citizens, civil servants and politicians), empowerment (of citizens and governments), social capital (differentiation or homogenization) and lifelong learning (user-generated content and collective intelligence).

Finally, section 5 will present the general conclusions and policy suggestions for decision

makers to benefit more (according to their views) of e-Participation by the citizens in their domain.

## 2 Epochal trends and the arrival of ICTs in the domain

### 2.1 Epochal trends: the participation of informed citizens in contemporary society

Government invitations of citizens to participate in policy making and the motivation of citizens to participate certainly are not new. They became an ever more important part of governance in modern democratic societies since the Second World War. Especially in the 1960s and 1970s a wave of interest in democratizing all domains in society launched by young people of the 'protest generation' could be observed. In those decades the power of traditional authorities began to crumble. Authority was no longer taken for granted. Henceforth it had to prove itself continually, not simply by claiming it, but through action and by communication with the subjects concerned.

After 1990 institutional participation by membership of political parties, trade unions and churches started to decline while membership of organizations for the protection of the environment increased. Voting or working for the first mentioned organizations and presenting their meetings also diminished. Gradually, this kind of participation was replaced by a more personal kind in all societal organizations<sup>4</sup>. This can be seen as an epiphenomenon of individualization<sup>5</sup>. Personal characteristics, interests or concerns came forward, not group identities given by birth and kept all life<sup>6</sup>.

The following longitudinal trends of participation can be observed:

- Individualized societal participation

In the modern mass society of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the percentage of members of societal organizations with only paper list membership has substantially increased. Subscription payments, donations and occasional postal votes for organizational elections became partial substitutes for meetings and physical efforts of organizing, recruitment and fundraising. This participation at a distance signifies a focus on the individual and on individual members in organizational thinking instead of a focus on the organization as a collectivity.

- Collective intelligence and action at a distance

Action at a distance in the 20<sup>th</sup> century was already practiced long before the advent of the Internet using the telephone, the checkbook, radio calls and letters to newspapers.

---

<sup>4</sup> See for example Inglehart, R. (1999). Postmodernization erodes respect for authority, but increases support for democracy. In: Norris, P. (Ed.). *Critical citizens. Global support for democratic governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 236-256.

<sup>5</sup> Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution. Changing values and political styles among western politics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

<sup>6</sup> P. Dekker et al. (2004). Democratie en civil society. In: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, *In het Zicht van de Toekomst*, Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2004, pp.181-219 Dekker P. et al. (2004). p. 196

Discussions in newspapers and on radio and television channels were modern forms of collective intelligence exchanged in the mass media.

- Emancipation drives (of youth, women and minorities of all kinds)

In the 1960s and 1970s emancipatory movements of youth and females became a mass phenomenon. With the arrival of a substantial number of migrants in European countries starting about the same time minority interests were brought forwards. These emancipatory drives were part of more general calls for democratization. These drives and calls have gone up and down in the past four decades, but they have regularly spurred the call for participation in official policy making of governments and societal organization.

- Democratization (of labour organizations, educational, health and welfare institutions, community and cultural organizations and the media)

So, the same happened to societal organizations. Participation in policy making was not only a political affair but it became part of many more large-scale organizations and communities. Works committees, school and university councils, patients and consumer organizations have institutionalized since the 1960s.

- Rise of informed citizenship

In this way many citizens became emancipated and to be emancipated they had to be informed. Citizens informed themselves by rising levels of literacy of all kinds and by media to produce a society of lifelong learning. Those who ran behind were supported by types of adult education that went far beyond the traditional schooling of illiterates.

- Differentiation of citizenship

The final trend to be described is the differentiation of citizenship. Increasingly it is acknowledged that THE citizen does not exist. In the strongly differentiated post-modern society no citizen is equal and every individual differs from any other in a particular position or characteristic. This was the basis for the segmentation of consumer markets by marketers from the 1950s onwards, to be followed by personalization. Currently, governments are following the marketers and first attempts are made to approach citizens with techniques of segmentation and personalization.

This short historical description was made to emphasize that these trends clearly preceded the advent of ICTs<sup>7</sup>. Following these trends people used traditional organizational and media means that were adequate at the time. The arrival of digital media only brought a number of new opportunities and risks in realizing these trends.

## **2.2 The arrival of ICTs and the opportunities of e-Participation**

---

<sup>7</sup> See for example: Dalton, R.J. (1996). *Citizen politics. Public opinion and political parties in advanced western democracies*. Second edition, First edition: 1988. Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc.

### 2.2.1 Transformative capacities of ICTs

In the 1980s ICTs arrived on a massive scale with the introduction of the PC with a relatively simple operating system and popular software in workplaces and households, The Internet appeared in academic circles. Immediately these technologies appealed to the imagination of future watchers, scientists and the early adopters of these technologies to launch more or less utopian visions of the future, among them in the field of politics and policies. The following characteristics of computers connected in networks (the Internet) were thought to have revolutionary or at least transformative implications for the democratization of politics and society at large (see Conceptual Framework); the Internet was seen as a:

- *interactive* medium that departs from the one-sided communication of existing mass media;
- *active and creative* medium enabling users to transform from viewers, listeners and readers to participants;
- *direct* medium in which individual users to determine at a distance what happens in the centre (of among others politics and te mass media);
- *platform* on which everybody is equal in principle as assumed expertise has to prove itself before being accepted;
- *network* medium enabling the collective creation of products online, not primarily by individual authors or businesses.

Imaginations were often framed in the perspective of a total revolution, a technological fix or as instruments that would overturn institutional politics and modes of policy making. See Conceptual Framework

### 2.2.2 Perspectives of transformation

Four waves of these more or less utopian perspectives can be distinguished in the past decades:

1. In the 1980s the *teledemocracy* perspective came forwards (notorious authors: Ch. Arterton, Th.Becker, B. Barber<sup>8</sup>). The Athenian agora was the most important source of inspiration for the idea that in networks citizens can perform politics and determine what happens in the centre of society working from their Internet or cable TV terminals. The expectation was that the removal of space barriers in ICTs and their central storage capacity would enable forms of direct democracy without intermediaries such as parties and representatives.
2. In the early 1990s a *virtual community* perspective appeared (a.o. H. Rheingold<sup>9</sup>). In this perspective the rise of usenet groups and other online communities would stimulate both online communities (communities of interest) and communities online (supporting existing physical communities). Main expectation was that these virtual communities could make up for 'lost community' in modern society (the crisis of traditional village and neighbourhood sociability).

---

<sup>8</sup> Arterton, Christopher F. (1987) *Teledemocracy: Can Technology Protect Democracy?* Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Becker, T.L. (1981) 'Teledemocracy: bringing power back to the people', *Futurist*, 15 (6): 6–9; Barber, B.J. (1984) *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

<sup>9</sup> Rheingold, Howard (1993) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley

3. Around the turn of the century was the time of the *Internet hype* after a massive spread of the Internet in society. Here visions of a 'new democracy' came forward that were equivalent to the vision of a 'new economy'<sup>10</sup>. The basic idea was the prospect of mass participation in politics and policy making via the Internet. In some visions citizens could even bypass institutional politics and the state to create their own political and policy reality. From the perspective of governments first experiments were waged in online consultation and debate of citizens considering government plans. The main expectation was that this would broaden participation.
4. From 2004 to the present: *the Web 2.0 perspective*. Observing the sharp rise of social and participatory use of the Internet by (co-)creative Internet users producing user-generated content it was expected that citizens would increasingly contribute to policy making in all kinds of ways: with online petitions, weblogs, civic journalism, wiki's (collective intelligence) etcetera<sup>11</sup>. The main expectation is that a multitude of creative contributions of user-generated content will appear.

### 2.2.3 The background: views of democracy

Behind these expectations of the potential aid of ICT to the participation in policy making clearly lie different views of democracy. Some support individual contributions in a teledemocracy referendum style, others stress discussion or debate and again others community building and inclusion. It is very important to make these views evident from the start. Six views of democracy will be distinguished here. They will be linked to their favourite applications of e-Participation<sup>12</sup>.

#### 1. Government-centric views

The classical Western view on democracy is *legalist democracy* – a so-called procedural view of democracy, regarding the constitution and other laws and rules as the foundations of democracy. Here a small, but strong and effective state is preferred. In this view e-Participation of citizens can help to improve public support for the government and the administration by offering more and better information in both directions.

The second conception of democracy is called *competitive democracy*. It is mainly supported in countries with a two-party or a presidential system. According to this view, parties and leaders compete for the support of the electorate. This rather elitist view of democracy emphasizes representation and efficient decision-making by leaders. Digital media are first and foremost used for information campaigns and election campaigns.

#### 2. Citizen-centric views

Four other views of democracy have a completely different strategic orientation. They are not government-centric but reason from civil society. Supporters of these views fight for a socialization of politics. This implies a more prominent role for social organizations and

---

<sup>10</sup> Among others: Shapiro, Andrew (2000). *The Control Revolution: How the Internet is Putting Individuals in Charge and Changing the World We Know*. New York: Public Affairs.

<sup>11</sup> Among others: Leadbeater, Charles (2008) We-think: The Power of Mass Creativity. Available: <http://www.wethinkthebook.net/home.aspx>

<sup>12</sup> J.A.G.M. van Dijk (1996). Models of democracy behind the design and use of ICT in politics. *The Public/Javnost III (1)*: 43-56. Jan van Dijk (2000). Models of Democracy and Concepts of Communication. In K. Kacker and J. van Dijk (Eds.) *Digital Democracy. Issues of Theory and Practice*. London, Thousand Oaks CA, New Delhi: Sage.



individual citizens. The assumption is that computer networks such as the Internet will enable them to have a direct influence on politics, and even to bypass institutional politics or replace it with their own political relations. While the first two views, intending to strengthen institutional politics are mainly supported by politicians and administrators, these alternative views are defended by many social organizations and intellectuals.

The most radical view concerning existing political practice is *plebiscitary democracy*. According to this view, political decisions have to be made through referenda or plebiscites. This implies a preference for direct democracy instead of representative democracy. The opportunities offered by computer networks to hold telepolls or telereferenda and to have online discussions have had an immediate appeal to the supporters of this view. Some use this view to realize or explicitly defend a populism in politics. This happens to be very fashionable at the time. Political persons and single issues are very appropriate for plebiscites and forms of direct democracy in choosing leaders and holding referenda.

Another alternative view is *pluralist democracy*. In this view, opinion formation within and between social organizations is emphasized. Democracy is not the will of the majority but that of a constantly changing coalition of minorities. Its most important value is pluralism in social and political discussion and in the media. It is a combination of direct and representative democracy, since representation is exercised not only by politicians but also by societal organizations. Digital media offer numerous opportunities for pluralism in public debates, among them online discussions. Sometimes group decision support systems can be used. So-called *deliberative democracy* also belongs to this view. It emphasizes discourse in free and open debates.

The fifth view discussed here is *participatory democracy*. Its supporters promote a socialization of politics, encouraging active citizenship. The emphasis lies on the broadest possible opinion formation about political affairs and on a particular combination of direct and representative democracy. Its most important instruments are public debates, public education and citizen participation in general. If the digital media are to play a positive role in enabling these instruments, access for all is vital.

The last view on democracy has appeared as a dominant model among the pioneers of the Internet community. The *libertarian view* is close to the pluralist and plebiscitarian views in several respects, as the opportunities for (virtual) community building, telepolling and online debates are proclaimed. Specific to libertarianism is the emphasis on autonomous politics by citizens in their own associations using the horizontal communication capabilities of computer networks in general and the Internet in particular. Favourite e-Participation applications are e-activism, online petitions, telepolls and online fora. This view favours so-called Web 2.0 tools.

#### **2.2.4 The background: changing scale and nature of government**

Another background for the rise of particular forms of e-Participation is the changing scale and nature of contemporary government. ICTs support both scale extensions and scale reductions of government operations and citizens' interests. At the one side scale is extended in the rise of globalization and regionalization (e.g. Europe); at the other side scale is reduced by the growing importance of local communities. The result is that the traditional scale levels of the nation state and municipalities are under pressure. The nation state transfers tasks to higher and lower (regional) levels while municipalities move tasks to both regions and local communities. Offering a global infrastructure ICTs are able to link all these

levels. However, the pressure comes from society as many modernization theories claim highlighting the combination of globalization and localization<sup>13</sup>.

In this report we will see that E-participation is practiced at all levels. In Europe there is growing attention for e-Participation at the European and local community level, be it to a different extent with particular applications (see Figure 5 in Section 4). Remarkably, e-Participation applications are still offered at one particular level and rarely between levels.

The opportunities of e-Participation also are considerably determined by the changing nature of government in contemporary democracies. Many characterizations for this are offered in the literature. It is impossible to go into detail here but we will refer to the following trends in the changing nature of governments: 1. the rise of network government, 2. government as facilitator, 3. governments that increasingly (have to) communicate with civil society and 4. shifting role relationships between governments and citizens.

1. The *perspective of network(ed) government* is described by several political theorists<sup>14</sup>. It is a combination of government enacted by internal networks (so-called joint-up government) and government executed in external networks with citizens and companies (online public services). A long-term perspective is government as a fully integrated organism of networks that works as a single unit and with one stop service delivery at all scale levels. In the short term government is already linking with the networks of citizens and companies via the Internet in online public services. E-participation comes in via this way: the opportunities of e-Democracy and e-public services on the Internet (the 'front offices'). However, it appeals to have an influence on policy and decision making in government itself, which means joint-up government (the 'back offices'). So far, this appeal has not been realized as we will show in this report. Network government is still in its infancy.
2. Traditionally governments are regulators, maintainers of the law and care-takers. However, the rise of a self-service society, strongly enabled by the Internet, and the rise of individualized participation and informed citizenship – see above- , supported by web 2.0 applications calls for a government that is not only a (top-down) regulator and care-taker, but also a *facilitator* enabling a more equal relationship between governments and citizens. Obviously, this is also the basis for e-Participation.
3. Increasingly governments will have to be *communicators* with civil society. This is not only necessary to rebuild trust in government among citizens but also because civil society itself is ever more engaged in online social networking and deliberation. Both e-Government and e-Participation will have to be practiced to realize this communicator role of governments. The current style of e-Government is rather

---

<sup>13</sup> A.o. Barber, Benjamin (1996) *Jihad versus McWorld: How the Planet is both Falling Apart and Coming Together*. New York: Ballantine; Giddens, A. (1991) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press; Sassen, S. (1998). *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: The New Press

<sup>14</sup> For example: Goldsmith, S. and Eggers, W. (2004). *Governing by Network, The New Shape of the Public Sector*. Washington D.C.: The Brooking Institution, Kamarck, E. (2007) *The End of Government as We Know It, Making public policy work*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers; van Dijk, J. and Winters, A. (2009), *The Perspective of Network Government*. In A.Meijer et al. (eds.) 2008 *ICTs, Citizens & Governance: After the Hype!*, Amsterdam and Fairfax VA: IOS Press.

instrumentalist<sup>15</sup>. It tries to mimic successful e-Commerce. It is supply-side oriented and measures its success on the quantity and technical advance of online public services offered<sup>16</sup>. A growing demand-side or user orientation can lead to more communication with citizens as clients of online public services and e-Participation can lead to more communication of governments with citizens as citizens. According to Botterman et al. (2009) this communication can offer more

- responsiveness to user needs and wants by empowering citizens
- open, participative and democratic governments
- new forms of evaluating and improving government performance<sup>17</sup>.

4. Together with this growth in communication *the roles* of governments (or their civil servants) and citizens are changing. The oldest role label is that of taxpayer versus maintainer of the law, stimulator of the economy and provider of infrastructure and services. A more recent one is the shift to citizen as customer versus government as supplier of services (notably in online service provision). However, the latest role relationship is or should be that of citizens as participants versus governments as communicators and facilitators. E-Participation is one of the activities to support this epochal shift in the nature of government.

## 2.2.5 Background: rights and responsibilities for governments and citizens

The rights and responsibilities of both governments and citizens in e-Participation are not yet established<sup>18</sup>. We will see that this indistinctness causes many problems for e-Participation projects. Citizens should know what they can expect as an investment and a result of practices of e-Participation. Governments have to know what they can ask and expect from citizens. In formal representative democracy the rights and duties of political representatives, civil servants and citizens are rather simple and clear. Governors, representatives and civil servants are accountable to citizens for their policies. Citizens have the right, and sometimes even the duty to vote and they should give information and pay taxes to governments when decided by representatives. A decisive characteristic, both opportunity and risk of e-Participation is that it uses tools of direct democracy in a representative democratic system. This causes imbalances in the system. Governors and civil servants often do not know how to respond to practices and results of e-Participation (see the impact analysis in Section 4). Most citizens think that these opportunities of participation simply are an extension of rights, forgetting that they, as stakeholders, also have the duty to, for instance give adequate and correct information, to not disturb discussions with improper behavior and to not manipulate the application concerned by means of fraud.

Many applications of e-Participation to be described in the next section, such as online petitions, plan consultations, referenda and citizen control sites reveal a tenor of direct

<sup>15</sup> See a.o. Chadwick, A. (2006). *Internet Politics, States, Citizens, and New Communication Technologies*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

<sup>16</sup> See a.o. Bekkers, V. and Homburg V. (2007). The Myths of EGovernment: Looking beyond the assumptions of a new and better government. *The Information Society* 23 (5), pp. 373-382.

<sup>17</sup> Botterman, M, Miljard, J., a. o.(2009) *Value for Citizens, A vision of public governance in 2020*. Report for the European Commission, Information Society and Media. Luxemburg: European Communities DOI 10.2759.

<sup>18</sup> See Miljard, J. and other contributors (2008). eParticipation: overview of issues and research questions. Deliverable D%1a to European eParticipation, Study and supply of serviced on the development of eParticipation in the EU. Available at [www.european-eparticipation.eu](http://www.european-eparticipation.eu)

democracy as they are means to participate in public policy outside regular election times. They are a consequence of the desire to engage citizens continually in the facilitator and communicator role of government discussed above. However, most governors and civil servants do not know how to deal with the results while the expectations of participating citizens might have been raised very high..

As we will see, the most basic problem of e-Participation in representative systems is how to integrate the direct democratic input of e-Participation tools in this system. Without supporting the simplistic ideas of an Athenian agora in a modern, extremely complex society, it must be acknowledged that both the epochal social trends discussed above and the technological opportunities of ICT reinforce the rise of direct-democratic input into the representative system. Inevitably, rights, responsibilities and accountabilities of both governments and citizens will have to be redefined for effective e-Participation that matches the expectations of all stakeholders.

### **2.2.6 Background: openness versus privacy and security**

The conflict between representative and direct democracy also appears in the opposition between the norms of openness versus confidentiality, privacy and security in e-Participation. The stereotype is that representative democracy uses secrecy and 'back-room policies' while direct democracy offers open opinion formation and decision making in petitions, debates peer-to-peer networking and referenda. Reality is far more complex. In the phases of decision making and policy execution any representative system needs time for deliberation, consideration and negotiation. This always takes some time and on some occasions a partial withdrawal from publicity. Moreover, the temporary confidentiality of negotiations is a legitimate instrument for successful consultation. Opposed to this the reality of direct democratic instruments often is less open than suggested. Petitions and referenda can be liable to hidden manipulation, debates in fact are often secluded from publicity and inclusion for all. Finally, peer-to-peer or other networking can be obscure and unaccountable to all outsiders.

Another realistic counterpart of openness in e-Participation is the legitimate privacy and security concern of all stakeholders. Petitions should be open in a free and democratic society, but votes will have to be private and secure when using ICT tools. This also goes for the use of voting guides. Suppliers of these guides have been accused of storing the IP addresses of users. So-called 'snitching sites', of citizens reporting crimes and offenses should be anonymous.

More in general, it must be claimed that most applications of e-Participation to be described in the next section should enable privacy options for users. This is not only a matter of principle but also of practice. As we will see the Achilles heel of e-Participation is the lack of trust of stakeholders in each other: citizens in governments and politicians or civil servants in citizens. A lack of privacy options will simply result in less participation by all parties. We will see that openness, transparency and accountability, important norms of e-Participation are ideal(istic) notions that meet many limitations in practice.

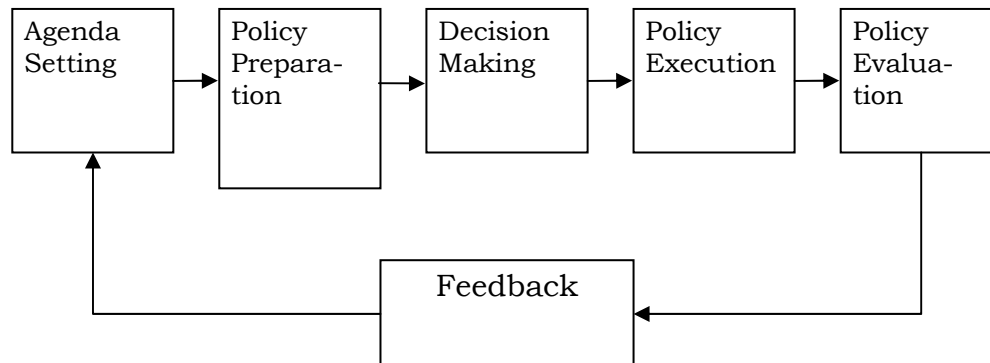
Finally, it must be stated that the (ICT) security of instruments of e-Participation is vital as most of them otherwise would be susceptible for manipulation and fraud.

## 3 Applications of ICT in the domain

### 3.1 Introduction

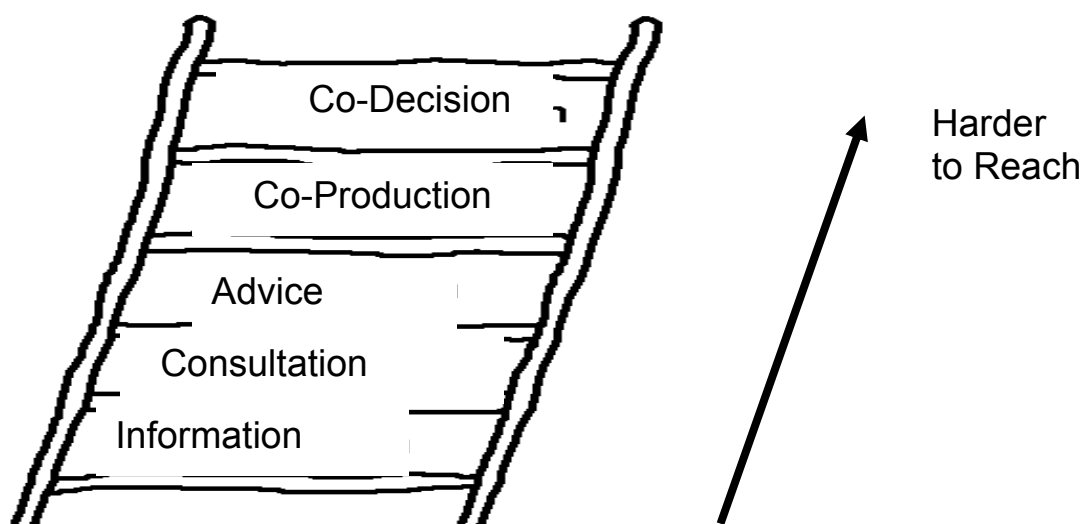
In this report the various kinds of applications of e-Participation are classified and analysed according to generally accepted phases of the policy process in general. This is a cycle that consists of the following phases:

**Figure 2: Phases in the Policy Process**



Currently, most experience in e-Participation has been reached in the phases of agenda setting, policy preparation and policy evaluation. Applying e-Participation in decision making and policy execution is contested. The views of democracy that strongly emphasize representation and representative democracy, the legalist and competitive views have doubts about directly engaging citizens in decision making and policy execution. These phases are supposed to be reserved for political representatives and public administrations executing the decisions of governments and parliaments. Here the only option for them would be e-voting in systems of representation.

This is related to the *nature* of activities in e-Participation. The so-called participation ladder – see Figure 3 - arranges these activities in the order of a number of steps that are increasingly difficult to take. All views of democracy and participation support open and accessible information exchange between governments, public administrations and citizens in the policy process. Citizen consultation is also supported by all, but the representative views do not want that obligations for governments are derived from the consultation results. Seriously accepting citizen advice is even harder to accept for the strict representative democracy views. Finally, co-production by citizens and governors of government policy and public service (design and execution) is accepted by some views of democracy but not by others. Co-decision is even more contested. Actually only the plebiscitarian and libertarian views of (direct) democracy – see above- support this opportunity of e-Participation.



**Figure 3: The Participation Ladder and the Nature of Activities in e-Participation**

In this section thirteen applications of e-Participation will be described and analysed (advantages and disadvantages). The list comes close to the list of eleven participation areas defined by Demo-Net in 2006<sup>19</sup>. The main differences are that the list in this report describes applications and inserts them in the framework of the policy phases and the distinction of government-centric and citizen-centric initiatives of eParticipation. In every phase of the policy process both the applications initiated by governments or public administrations and by citizens will be listed.

<sup>19</sup> DEMO-net (2006). D5.1 Report on current ICTs to enable Participation. Available at:

- **Information Provision.** ICT to structure, represent and manage information in participation contexts.
- **Community Building /Collaborative Environments.** ICT to support individuals coming together to form communities, to progress shared agendas and to shape and empower such communities.
- **Consultation.** ICT in official initiatives by public or private agencies to allow stakeholders to contribute their opinion, either privately or publicly, on specific issues.
- **Campaigning.** ICT in protest, lobbying, petitioning and other forms of collective action (except of election campaigns covered under electioneering area).
- **Electioneering.** ICT to support politicians, political parties and lobbyists in the context of election campaigns.
- **Deliberation.** ICT to support virtual, small and large-group discussions, allowing reflection and consideration of issues. In our survey deliberation also includes discussion and consideration of issues in an unstructured and non-moderated manner.
- **Discourse.** ICT to support analysis and representation of discourse. In our survey discourse differentiates from deliberation in that it covers conversation and dialogue between citizens and elected representatives.
- **Mediation.** ICT to resolve disputes or conflicts in an online context.
- **Spatial planning.** ICT in urban planning and environmental assessment.
- **Polling.** ICT to measure public opinion and sentiment.
- **Voting.** ICT in the context of public voting in elections, referenda or local plebiscites.

## **3.2 Agenda setting**

### **1. Open Online Consultations (governments and public administrations)**

Governments sometimes not only inform citizens about their policies on government websites, but also invite citizens to reply or to have an input with their own ideas, suggestions or complaints. Information provision is the most frequently used application in e-Participation (see Figure 4 below). Only, information provision is not sufficient to talk about participation. At least an invitation to react to the information supplied should be added.

Public administrations more often ask for complaints and suggestions about their public services to improve quality and develop new services often asked for. Some governments explore the Internet to seek for weblogs, online discussions and actions in order to know what the mood is among citizens.

Although information exchange without participation is no part of e-Participation the quality, accessibility and usability of the information provided for consultation appears to be decisive for its success. Another vital issue is trust: some citizens are rather cynical in their belief that governments and public administrations will not perceive or act on their input to open consultations (see Figures 7 and 8 below).

### **2. E-petitions and E-activism (citizens)**

In many EU member states, notably the UK, citizens initiate or use e-petitions to put single issues, complaints, or requests on the political or government agenda. In Scotland this has become an official initiative of parliament (citizens are invited to fill petition lists on a website)<sup>20</sup>. E-petitions can become very important tools in those countries where there is a legal right to put issues on the agenda of parliament after having collected a particular large number of signatures. The Internet is a much more powerful tool to reach this goal than traditional means of signature collection. Recently, such a petition had an impact on decision making in the UK. The Brown government withdrew a plan for road pricing after a petition against it reached mass support.

The Internet is also used on a massive scale for E-activism. Numerous groups launch websites to promote their special interests and viewpoints appealing not only to fellow citizens but also to governments and politicians. These voices generally are autonomous and not influenced by governors or politicians. However, it is rarely clear whether these activists only speak for themselves or for a particular part of the citizenry. The communication style of E-activism is to express and to try to convince and influence the opinions of others and not to discuss own opinions.

## **3.3 Policy Preparation**

### **3. Online Plan Consultations (Governments)**

During the years of the Internet hype many European governments launched official online consultations of citizens to discuss government plans that were already prepared. The intention was to engage more citizens in the process of plan making than only those citizens that were known as more or less professional lobbyists gathered on official meetings. This application has been used by national ministries discussing new policy documents and by local governments presenting zoning and building plans for particular neighborhoods. Even municipal budgets have been proposed to local citizens to inform them and to consult them

---

<sup>20</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/petitions/open/index.htm>

about priorities of expenditure and savings<sup>21</sup>. In general the results were disappointing as the same kind of lobbyists showed up as before and because governments did not accept results as they were deemed to be not representative.

In the current stage of Internet diffusion and technological development the opportunities for online plan consultations increase because more citizens are able to participate and because a number of innovations in plan consultations are introduced<sup>22</sup>.

First, plans can be visualized better. This substantially increases the potential of online plan consultations among everybody, but in particular for less educated people in terms of literacy. For example, citizens can see and choose between visual models of particular street or neighborhood plans or explore Second-Life-like environments of their future district<sup>23</sup>.

Second, with visualization and aided by computer simulation policies can be modeled and different optional trajectories of plans can be simulated for a large part of the population. Third, (serious) gaming with all kinds of plan options can make the participation in online plan consultations much more attractive for younger citizens in particular. A fourth innovation consists of tools to analyze the textual contents of feedback on plan consultations and online forums (the next application to be discussed). They are so-called *symantic web* applications and *Web 3.0 tools* (intelligence used to extract meaning from web sources). With the exception of visualizations these innovations still are in an experimental stage and only explored by higher educated professionals. Their social impact and potential cannot be assessed at this moment.

#### **4. Online Forums for Policy Making (Citizens)**

Since the advent of Usenet groups more than twenty years ago Internet users have discussed all kinds of societal issues in online forums. They offer the opportunity of contributing to discussions 24 hours a day and from every location without the necessity to meet. All contributions can be made simultaneously. Usually there is no limit to the number and length of contributions. Many online forums are dedicated to political and policy issues. About every important issue stirs some kind of discussion on the Internet. Sometimes, they are linked to E-activism.

Evidence shows that online forums do not draw more people into these discussions than in traditional meetings discussing policy or political issues, with the important exception of a part of the young generation<sup>24</sup>. Rarely, they are representative for particular populations as they are dominated by well-educated middle-aged men<sup>25</sup>. Somehow online discussions

---

<sup>21</sup> For example in the German city Esslingen in 2003. Ultimately, this project was not successful: quantitative and qualitative participation of inhabitants was reasonable (about 150), but results were not accepted by the local public administration, among others because the municipal council did not want to lose power over financial decisions. See Roeder, S et al. (2005). 'Public Budget Dialogue- An Innovative Approach to E-Participation'. In M. Böhlen (eds), TCGOV 2005, *LNAI 3416*, pp. 48-56. IFIP 2005.

<sup>22</sup> See a.o. Botterman, M. et al. (2009) *Value for Citizens, A vision of public governance in 2020*. (Note 17) p. 24

<sup>23</sup> See a.o. Aichholzer, G. and Westholm, H. (2009). Evaluating eParticipation Projects: Practical Examples and Outline of an Evaluation Framework. *European Journal of eParticipation*, No. 7, March 2009

<sup>24</sup> A.o. Katz, J. and Rice, R. (2002). *Social Consequences of Internet Use, Access, Involvement, and Interaction*. Cambridge MA, London: The MIT Press and Delli Carpini, M. and Keeter, S. (2003) 'The Internet and an Informed Citizenry', in D. Anderson, M. Cornfield (eds.) *The Civic Web, Online Politics and Democratic Values*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 129-154.

<sup>25</sup> A.o.: ter Hedde, M. and Svensson J. (2009). Online Discussion on Government Websites: Fact and Failure? In. A. Meijer, K. Boomsma and P. Wagenaar, *ICT, Citizens and Governance: After the Hype!* pp. 21-37. Amsterdam, Berlin, Tokio: IOS Press.



appear to be less attractive for females than for males<sup>26</sup>. Moreover, discussion is not equalized as most online forums are dominated by a small core of contributors<sup>27</sup>. Most participants only read the contributions of others and do not contribute themselves. Finally, it must be acknowledged that these forums have no, or only a small effect on opinion formation and decision taking in institutional politics, even less than the official plan consultations discussed above<sup>28</sup>. Governors complain about the lack of representativeness. However, as these forums are so popular with many thousands of participants in every country, they must have some effect on the consciousness and knowledge of policy issues among citizens<sup>29</sup>.

Deliberating online groups have some important disadvantages that should be corrected by moderation, discussion rules and the filtering of contributions marked by scolding, insults and flaming to make these collectives effective<sup>30</sup>

- *Amplifying errors*: bias in groups tends to be not reduced but extended; escalation to a course of action that is failing can often be observed;
- *Common knowledge effect*: information and views held by all group members have far more influence than minority or individual information/views (that tend to remain silent);
- *Cascades*: following the lead of others people go along with the crowd to maintain a good opinion of others though they know better (they also remain silent)
- *Polarization*: deliberating groups turn individual initial different views more extreme instead of coming together.

Another condition is the organization of an equal playing field for discussion. When the weblog of a particular person or the website of a particular pressure group launches the discussion, postings often will simply be used for propaganda or advertisement. For example on the very popular weblog of the Italian comedian Beppe Grillo, that also acts as a politician Grillo himself is the central actor in a 'discussion' with his readers following a star structure. Grillo introduces his statements and readers respond with all kinds of postings that are published without any filter. In such a structure rarely a discussion or discussion thread appears among the readers themselves.

The last problem in online discussions to be mentioned is the low level of interactivity and of drawing of conclusions. Discussion threads on average are very short: someone makes an argument and others reply, than most discussions stop<sup>31</sup>. As compared to physical meetings there is no social-psychological drive for consensus and to come to a conclusion in online

---

<sup>26</sup> Ter Hedde and Svensson (former note) and Jan van Dijk (1999) Elektronische discussies bij Interactieve Beleidsvorming (Electronic Discussions in Interactive Policy making). *Bestuurskunde* 5 (1999), p. 199-209..

<sup>27</sup> Ter Hedde and Svensson; Jankowski, Nicholas and M. van Selm (2000). The Promise and Practice of Public Debate in Cyberspace. In K. Hacker & J. van Dijk (eds.), *Digital Democracy, Issues of Theory and Practice*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage; Norris, P. (2001) *Digital Divide, Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet worldwide*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press; Rojo, A. and Ragsdale, R. (1997) 'Participation in electronic forums', *Telematics and Informatics*, 13 (1): 83-96.

<sup>28</sup> See note 16.

<sup>29</sup> Jan van Dijk (2006). *The Network Society*, p. 106. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.

<sup>30</sup> C. Sunstein (2008). *Infotopia. How Many Minds Produce Knowledge*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press. A host of social-psychological publications exist that testify to the special group dynamic effects in computer-mediated communication and online discussion groups. Some of them support the discussion quality of online groups and others harm it.

<sup>31</sup> Ter Hedde and Svensson (2009), Jankowski and van Selm (2000), Rojo and Ragsdale (2003) among others.

discussions<sup>32</sup>. Again, this shows how important moderation is as a means to stimulate and organize online discussions.

### **5. Online Knowledge Communities and Social Media serving Policy Making (Citizens)**

Online forums already exist since the famous Usenet groups of the 1980s and 1990s. Online or virtual communities drew a lot of attention in the 1990s. Since that time they have evolved both in depth and in breadth. Online forums have deepened into knowledge communities of professionals. Virtual communities of special interests have become more popular with the rise of so-called 'social and participatory media' or 'social computing' that are fed by user-generated content. Currently, social networking sites are used by a majority of European Internet users<sup>33</sup>. Their prime focus is the maintenance of social relationships and entertainment. Next to them we can observe the rise of weblogs for information and news, wiki's or wikipedia's for knowledge building, YouTube and others for the exchange of creative content and virtual communities such as Second Life and game sites for social exchange, identity formation and play. Usually, they do not engage with the sphere of official public policy making. Exceptions are political weblogs and online health support groups of patients. Another exception are citizens' watchdog communities such as Wikileaks<sup>34</sup> that we rubricate under Citizen control sites (below).

Serving public policy making these applications are still in an experimental stage and mainly practiced by the early innovators and professionals of 'serious' social computing. However, in theory and practice online knowledge communities and social media can support issue based political involvement of activists and interest groups. "People are able to find each other around very specific subjects and to spontaneously organize an advocacy group"<sup>35</sup>. They can exchange content in networks with a predominant social character and gather knowledge that gives them more influence on society and on government. In so-called 'crowd sourcing' the presumed mass-collaborating tools of Web 2.0 afford the compilation, structuration and dissemination of public sector information in order to make government more transparent and public officials accountable.

The experimental stage of these applications makes a social impact analysis rather difficult. Their main problem seems to be inclusion. Unlike the related online health support groups and citizen control sites that are popular among many social categories, social media and knowledge networks for 'serious' applications are mainly used by people with high education. After all, they require a fairly high level of digital skills, and when applied to the public sector knowledge of government affairs. Other problems are the reliability of user-generated content and the potential of manipulation<sup>36</sup>. When they use discussion formats, f.i. in crowd sourcing all the opportunities and risks of online debates discussed in the previous paragraph appear.

The growing popularity of social networking sites has attracted governments, civil servants politicians to see whether they can reach them with their messages. The Barack Obama campaign has used the social media to draw attention, support and volunteers. Governments and civil servants worldwide try to 'infiltrate' these networks and other social media for the benefit of public information campaigns, to learn about moods and interests among the population at large or simply to survey and censor them (e.g. China).

---

<sup>32</sup> Attempt of social-psychological explanation is made in Jan van Dijk, *The Network Society* (2006), p. 229-232.

<sup>33</sup> According to Technorati (2009), a search engine for the 'blogosphere': <http://www.technorati.com/>

<sup>34</sup> Wikileaks ([www.wikileaks.org](http://www.wikileaks.org)) publishes and comments on leaked documents alleging government and corporate misconduct

<sup>35</sup> Huijboom, N., van den Broek, T. Frissen, V. a.o. (2009). *Key Areas of Social Computing impact in the Public Sector. Final Report* (not yet published) p. 110

<sup>36</sup> Idem. P. 116.

### 3.4 Decision Making

#### **6. E-voting (governments; election committees)**

ICT offers new channels for voting both in elections and in referenda or official opinion polls. A distinction should be made between electronic machine voting and electronic distance voting. The last kind of e-voting is discussed here. It offers new opportunities for people who live far from a polling station, have a lack of time or are handicapped. However, most evidence in the few instances where online e-voting is already practiced – mainly among expats- shows that these opportunities do not, or only scarcely result in a higher voter turnout. Most experience has Estonia where Internet voting for all voters has been applied in local (2005) and national (2007) elections using the available general ID cards. In the (nationwide) local elections 9.317 persons (or 1% of the electorate) voted via the Internet and in the national elections 30.275 (about 5%)<sup>37</sup>. So, the number is rising and it is to be expected that E-voting will be an important *additional* channel in future elections. However, a number of basic problems have to be solved to turn e-voting into a generally accepted channel. Discussion concentrates on technical issues (mainly identification, privacy, security and fraud) and on the accessibility and usability of the channel for all. However, basic social and political problems might be more difficult to solve. They are:

- The secrecy of the vote

As opposed to the secret ballot others are frequently able to view citizens voting at their own terminals.

- Opportunity of free individual voting without the interference of others.

E-voting is liable to direct social pressure of partners, parents and others influencing the individual vote in private situations.

- Exclusion of election propaganda near the e-voting application

As opposed to the ban on propaganda inside or in front of polling stations propaganda in settings of E-voting could be just one click away: a link to a party website or the next on the favourites list.

So, outdoor electronic or traditional polling stations should be kept available for all.

#### **7. E-campaigning (citizens and politicians)**

The Barack Obama campaign has shown how important E-campaigning can become for elections. With his Internet applications he gathered more than 500 million dollars of funds and organized an army of campaign volunteers as participants in his campaign. E-mail, YouTube, social networking sites and an extended own website were very frequently used. This electoral technology will somehow move to Europe as well.

Citizens themselves can also use E-campaign means to put a pressure on governments. This also happens outside election times. On the Internet we have thousands of European pressure groups trying to influence government decision making.

However, currently the most important applications of E-campaigning for citizens themselves are *E-voting guides* that are very popular in several European countries. They are decision-support systems offered by more or less independent public policy and research institutes helping voters to choose the best party, candidate or referendum option on the basis of a

---

<sup>37</sup> See English Wikipedia: [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic\\_voting\\_in\\_Estonia#cite\\_note-5](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Electronic_voting_in_Estonia#cite_note-5) (retrieved on 7-5-2009)

number of positions and statements. Their result is a particular advice to vote. Their popularity in a large number of European countries rises so fast<sup>38</sup> that perhaps they can be called the most important contemporary tool of e-Participation. These guides have a number of opportunities and risks:

Opportunities are:

- Assistance in decisions to vote a party or candidate for those who are insufficiently informed
- Assisting those who have a lack of time or motivation to easily get familiar with current election issues
- Turning voters to substantial issues, instead of political images or persons as voting guides are based on programmatic issues

Risks are:

- Partiality: the design and composition of the guide can lead users more in one than in the other direction<sup>39</sup>. How independent are the suppliers?
- Manipulation: guides may lead the users in a direction they don't want: (surprising result). For example, they want a choice based on ideology or persons, but get a completely issues based choice. The methodology of the guides is not clear to many users.
- Simplification of political issues: in most guides simple yes/no choices have to be made for single issues without coherence
- Incompleteness: with many competing candidates or parties often not all of them are in the guides. Those that are included, have no say in the choice of items that has been made from their programmes.
- Lack of access: though very popular the guides are mainly used by those already going to vote, those that are more politically involved and relatively high educated.

### 3.5 Policy Execution

#### 8. e-Maintenance of the Law (by citizens invited by governments)

Of course governments use ICT systems extensively to control for criminality and offenses of rules and regulations themselves. However, the government can use additional eyes to survey what happens in society. This certainly is a kind of participation in policy execution. We are talking about municipal and police sites on which citizens are able to report all kinds of offenses, from child pornography to having seen someone driving a car using a mobile phone that is not hands-free. These *snitching sites* are increasingly popular among the

---

<sup>38</sup> For example: in the German general election of 2005 more than 5 million Germans used this tool. In the Netherlands, one of the first countries using Electronic Voting Guides, since the 1990s, in the general election of 2006 4,7 million potential voters used the so-called *Stemwijzer.nl*, that is about 2/3d of the electorate. In a representative survey of the University of Tilburg 42% of respondents declared this tool was helpful to them in deciding their vote, 27% responded that it influenced their party preference and 15% answered that it changed their original intended vote. See M. Boogerman (2006). *Enquête bezoekers Stemwijzer*, Tilburg: University of Tilburg.

<sup>39</sup> For example: At the time of the Dutch referendum on the European Constitution (2006) there were several competing guides. Filling in the guide of the opponents to the Constitution 'inevitably' led to the choice NO, while the most popular guide (*Stemwijzer.nl*) was accused of being in favour of the constitution.

population. They can also turn against governments as they can also be used to report offenses by civil servants and to launch complaints against government acts (see below).

### **9. e-Government services following the needs of citizens and including participation (government initiative)**

The provision of e-Government services is still marked by a strong supply-side orientation. The goal is to provide as many public services online as possible and to offer them in the most advanced shapes, including full electronic transactions. However, it appears that there is scarcely any correlation between the supply of these services and the demand by citizens that lags far behind. For example, in 2009 Austria has an availability of 100% of government services for the public while only 39% of Austrians have used the Internet in the last 3 months for interaction with public authorities (Eurostat 2009) – Also see the ‘i2010 eGovernment Action Plan’ (Commission, 2006) for a comparison in all EU countries.- Online public services can offer major improvements for European citizens but we have to admit that many still prefer traditional channels and that online services often increase the use of call centers and the like because the Internet services often are not sufficiently user-friendly or interactive. A multi-channel strategy is required (van Dijk et al. 2008, Ebbers et al. 2008).

The main solution to this mismatch of supply and demand is the systematic registration of user needs, competencies (skills) and behavior. This is common practice in the corporate sector, but unfortunately not in the public sector. Citizens’ needs and behavior in using online government services have to be continually monitored and *demand side* benchmarks have to be developed. This is a general way to offer citizens more participation in the practice of e-Government services.

A second solution is to link democratic participation to service provision. Usually e-Government mimics a rather narrow type of e-commerce. However, government services often can be linked to opportunities for citizen input and for more ‘political’ uses. For example, governments can offer simple online schemes to request garbage collection at a particular address and time. But they also could extend these services with venues for complaints and suggestions of improvement concerning environmental and dirt issues in the neighborhood concerned. This is an important new kind of participation in governmental affairs that has to be explored.

### **10. e-Government services with participatory user-design (government initiative)**

Some electronic governments do invite citizen input in designing and improving online public services in advance, not the use of it afterwards. This is called user-centred service design. This is quite a step to take for the traditionally supply-oriented online and offline government public service provision. It is a part of the start of a demand-side shift that is made by some European governments under the influence of the opportunities of ICTs.

### **11. E-complaints and e-surveillance (initiated by citizens)**

Citizens themselves are also able to launch sites for complaints against wrong or badly executed government policy. This happens on the fields of social and public services, the execution of for instance environmental, juridical, mobility and minority or immigration policies and even cases of corruption. Here it appears that these opportunities of e-Participation can be a two-edged sword as the same technology can be used to undermine government policies and regulations. For example, sites are available that warn drivers for the exact places where speed cameras along the road are installed.

### 3.6 Policy Evaluation

A fast growing number of applications are available for policy evaluation both on the initiative of governments and citizens. Along with the applications of agenda setting and policy preparation they are most frequently used.

#### **12. Quality panels and individual evaluations of online public services (government initiative)**

Some governments, mainly on the local level have installed online quality panels or individual feedback systems in their online public service supply. This enables citizens to rate the level of service provision and to return suggestions. For governments this gives the opportunity to improve services continually. Notice that this application is the registration of citizen *opinions*, not citizen usage *behaviour* as called for above (under 9).

#### **13. Citizen control sites and information services for public or government policy (citizen initiative)**

The fastest growing applications of e-Participation are all kinds of control sites and information services for citizens that enable them to evaluate official policy results on a daily basis *and to use them for their own decisions* in daily life, such as the choice of a place to live. The issues concerned are not as political as the familiar policy debates on the Internet and other mass media. However, they prove to be very attractive to average citizens, also those with no political motivation. Examples of these control sites are sites where local residents are able to report the level of noise around airports and the pollution of particular regions or waters. Extremely popular are *social geographical cards* of quarters and neighbourhoods reporting their statistics of criminality, housing prices and living quality. Citizens frequently use them in their decision to buy a house somewhere. Strikingly, these services usually are private initiatives of small Internet companies that process publicly available data from governments in a far more efficient and usable way than governments themselves apparently are able to do.

### 3.7 Usage Frequencies of e-Participation applications in Europe

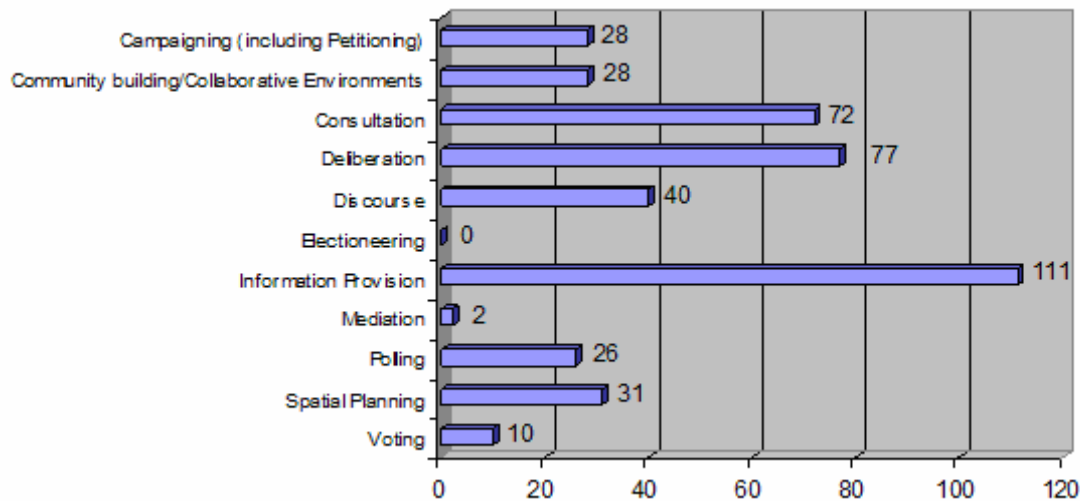
In 2008 Greek investigators Panopoulou, Tambouris and Tarabanis have made an inventory of current e-Participation activities across Europe<sup>40</sup>. They detected and analysed 255 e-Participation initiatives from 18 different countries and 34 languages in online databases, award schemes, literature research and communication with experts and project owners. The number is not complete and perhaps not representative as only projects with (at least) English or German summaries were selected. The sample contained both finished and running projects. The projects were analysed along the scheme of e-Participation areas devised by DEMO-Net<sup>41</sup>

The following frequency of areas of the 255 e-Participation applications were found (overlap was allowed).

---

<sup>40</sup> E. Panopoulou, E. Tambouris and K. Tarabanis (2009). eParticipation Initiatives: How is Europe progressing? *European Journal of ePractice*, no. 7, March 2009

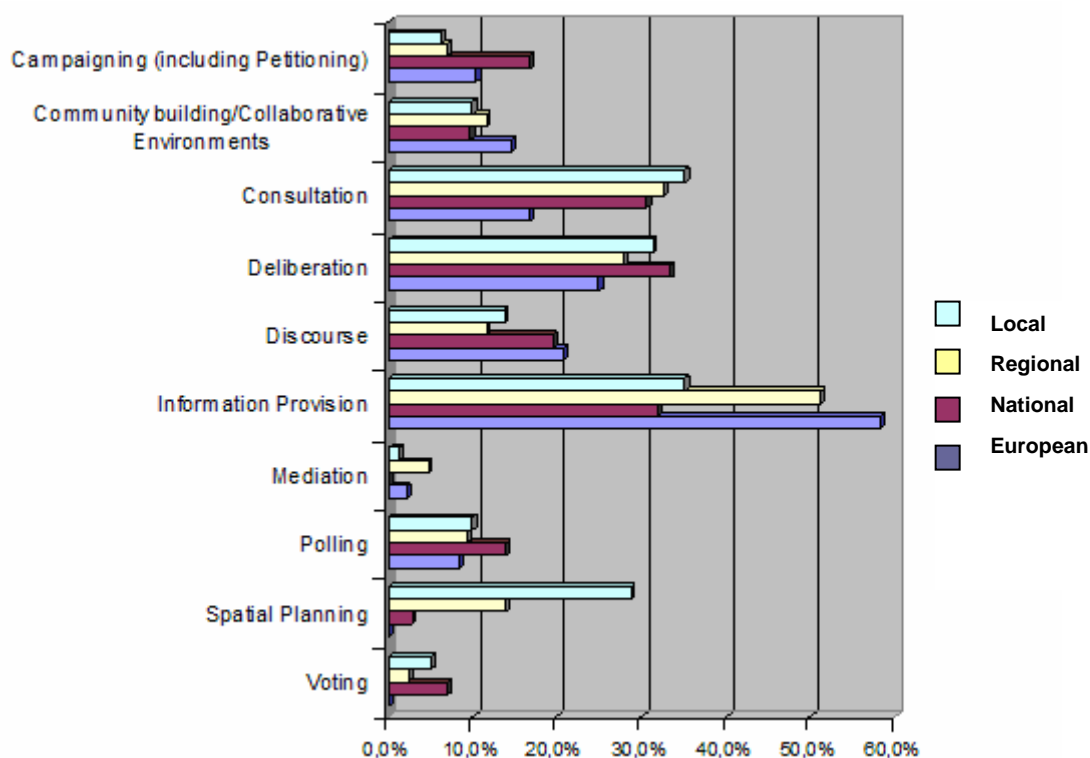
<sup>41</sup> See Note ...



**Figure 4. Distribution of application areas in 255 European e-Participation projects (selected in 2008). Source: Panopoulou et al. (2009)**

Information provision, consultation and deliberation appear to be the most important application areas. Information provision mainly corresponds with our application 1: open online consultations (asking for feedback on government information sites). Consultation primarily matches 3: online plan consultations. Deliberation equals 2: e-petitions and e-activism, 4: online forums and 5: social media. This testifies to the fact that e-Participation currently concentrates on the first phases of the policy process: agenda setting and policy preparation. Decision making and policy evaluation are not in focus. Policy execution is not contained in the areas distinguished by DEMO-net.

When we compare the application areas on the local, regional, national and European levels we can observe that consultation in general and consultation on spatial planning in particular mainly are a local affair while information provision is the most important application at the European level. Polling is most used at the national level. See Figure 5 below.



**Figure 5** Distribution of application areas across geographical levels in 255 European e-Participation projects (selected in 2008). Source: Panopoulou et al. (2009)

## 4 Social impact analysis

After having described the various applications of e-Participation together with their opportunities and risks, we are able to make an impact analysis of these applications on the domain of participation in policy making. This is the ultimate goal of this report, of course. Unfortunately we can only give a provisional impact analysis. The main reason is that current and past e-Participation research in the last 10 to 15 years has delivered inconclusive evidence. So we will first have to make a short description of the state of the art of e-Participation research, both scientific and policy oriented.

According to a 2006 survey of who was doing what in European e-Participation research Macintosh et al.<sup>42</sup> found the considerable number of 76 research groups from 20 European countries responding to the survey. Most research came from the UK, Italy and Germany. The emphasis was on online deliberation and consultation projects. In general, a lack of research on technology assessment and impact assessment was observed<sup>43</sup>.

<sup>42</sup> Macintosh, A., Coleman, S., and Lalljee, M. (2005). *E-Methods for Public Engagement: Helping Local Authorities communicate with citizens*. Bristol: Bristol City Council for the Local e-democracy National Project.

<sup>43</sup> Macintosh, A. (2008). *E-Democracy and E-Participation Research in Europe*. In: H. Chen, L. Brandt et al. (Eds.), *Digital Government*. pp. 85-102. New York: Springer Science



What are the reasons for the lack of conclusive results of such a large number of investigators? The first reason is that a general evaluation framework of e-Participation projects was missing until fairly recently as we will discuss below. The reason for this comes from theory and practice. In theory scientists do not agree on the definition of e-Participation. Some definitions are much broader than others (the one in this report is fairly broad). In practice, concrete e-Participation projects rarely make their goals and expectations explicit and this makes a systematic evaluation rather difficult.

Some observers mention more basic reasons. Medaglia (2007)<sup>44</sup> observes a dominance of descriptive approaches and a lack of theoretically grounded contributions. A general observation is that e-Participation research is very fragmentary and case-oriented. Sanford and Rose (2007)<sup>45</sup> conclude in their overview that motivations for e-Participation research are rather different and that coherence is missing. They have distinguished three perspectives:

1. The participative imperative: the desire to understand, improve or reshape societal participation forms. This is a democratic motivation with a strong ideological or normative drive.
2. An instrumental justification: e-Participation applications are investigated as instruments for improved public policy and the implementation of services.
3. A technology focus: many researchers study the role of technology, sometimes with a view to improve it.

The first motivation can make researchers a bit blind for empirical impact analysis. The second and the third focus on e-Participation tools might lead to the idea of a technological fix for problems of participation and engagement that in fact go much deeper. Instrumental and technological research only is not sufficient to draw conclusions for a substantial policy impact analysis.

Currently a large number of Ph.D. theses are prepared in the field of e-Participation<sup>46</sup>. We will have to wait and see whether they produce more conclusive results.

In this situation this report is only able to make a **provisional impact analysis** drawn from the available literature discussed in the broad framework of policy phases for e-Participation presented here. We will make this analysis by following the themes from the Conceptual Framework that are also used in the other domain reports.

With the theme *rationalization* we will discuss the effectiveness and efficiency of the e-Participation applications described in terms of more or less explicit goals. Additionally, we will pay attention to the goals of better informed policies, faster policy making, transparency and openness.

Under the theme *networking* the opportunities and threats of direct (peer-to-peer) networking between citizens (or members of institutions) and between citizens and policy makers will be listed.

The theme *empowerment and participation* deals with the impact of e-Participation applications on the actual participation of citizens and members in the policy making process.

---

<sup>44</sup> Medaglia, R. The challenged identity of a field: The state of the art of eParticipation research. *Information Polity* 12 (2007), pp 169-181.

<sup>45</sup> Sanford, C. and Rose, J. (2007). Characterizing eParticipation. *International Journal of Information Management* 27 (2007), pp. 406-421.

<sup>46</sup> See a collection of some of them in Avdic, A., Hedström, K, Rose, J and Grönlund, A. (Eds.) (2007). *Understanding eParticipation - Contemporary PhD eParticipation research in Europe* Örebro: Örebro University Library. Available on [www.demo-net](http://www.demo-net).

Are these applications used more and in other ways than older venues of participation? What is the social background of those engaged?

Though the theme *social capital building* is the focus of another domain report the potential contribution of e-Participation applications to community and social relationships building among citizens might be an effect that is just as important than the influence on policy making in the institutional or political domain.

The last theme will be *information and lifelong learning*. Continuous information exchange between citizens or members and policy makers is the core activity of most applications of e-Participation. Even when these applications would be less effective in terms of contributions to policy or decision making, they could still be very instructive to the participants themselves, both citizens and governors. Continuous citizenship and membership training can be very important additional goals of e-Participation.

## 4.1. Rationalization

What are the effectiveness and efficiency of these applications of e-Participation ? The answer clearly depends on the view of democracy one supports. In one view the quantity of participation by citizens is the decisive norm, in another view it is the quality, e.g. the quality of deliberation in online discussion. In again other views it is the influence on decision making by governments that holds. All views support the norm that e-Participation is able to improve the quality of policy making by the exchange of information between citizens and governments in two directions. The quantity and quality of participation and the quality of information in decision making are aspects of rationalization in contemporary society. The millions invested in e-Participation projects are expected to have their returns. These returns should be measurable. For this purpose currently evaluation frameworks for these projects are designed. They should first of all determine the effectiveness and efficiency of e-Participation projects. We will see that this is not an easy task.

### 4.1.1 Effectiveness and efficiency

The effectiveness and efficiency of applications of e-Participation depends on the goals governments or citizens attach to them, and behind these goals often are different views of democracy. Those supporting better information exchange between policy makers and citizens will look at different goals to be achieved than those attempting more deliberation between the parties concerned or participation in decision making.

According to the literature potential goals of *governments* with e-Participation can be:

- Improving the quality of government policies and services
- Closing the gap perceived to be growing between governments and citizens
- Boosting the legitimacy of government policy (because citizens are consulted)
- Knowing what is going on in society: e-Participation as social antenna
- Insight in the growing social, cultural and opinion diversity in society
- Mobilizing unknown creativity and expertise in society at large, both among professionals and lay people.
- 

The potential goals of *citizens* in e-Participation are:

- Citizens want to put (new, forgotten or neglected) issues on the agenda
- Citizens want more attention to a particular special interest of their own

- Citizens want more information and better services
- Citizens want to discuss particular issues with policy makers
- Citizens want more choice or a larger part of policy decision making
- Citizens want to monitor the execution of government policy that is in their interest
- Citizens want to call attention to particular abuses or criminal acts
- Citizens want to help in solving particular social problems

The biggest problem in evaluating the effectiveness and efficiency of e-Participation applications or projects is that most often they do not state their goals in an explicit way. It is even more unusual to find expected quantitative results in project plans. After the project one rarely settles accounts on the original goals. Background views of democracy are most often not mentioned.

This state of affairs may be understandable and acceptable in a period of experimentation when one is still looking for the possibilities. However, after a time-span of ten to fifteen years of experiments in e-Participation one expects more, at least more explicit project evaluations. After all, the EU, among other levels of governance has spent many millions in these projects in recent Framework Programmes<sup>47</sup>.

### 1. Evaluation Frameworks for e-Participation

Since about five years e-Participation researchers have started to make evaluation frameworks for projects. The most widely accepted is the framework devised by Macintosh and Whyte in 2008<sup>48</sup>. This has been further elaborated by the European Network of Excellence DEMO-net and by Aichholzer and Westholm (2009)<sup>49</sup>. This framework contains three perspectives. The first is the project perspective with classical criteria valid for all project evaluations such as goals, mean and results and criteria valid for e-Participation projects such as community development and obtaining better informed opinions. The second perspective is called socio-technical. This deals with the project design and the software and other tools used. Here the acceptability, accessibility, usefulness, and usability of the projects for users have the focus of attention. Finally, the democratic perspective is elaborated. This concentrates on the democratic appeal of e-Participation such as representation, support of engagement, transparency and accountability. See the very detailed complete framework in Annex 1 of this report.

This framework has only started to be used, mostly with a selection of criteria from its complete list. Macintosh and Whyte (2008) have first applied it to four local authority led projects in the context of the UK Local e-Democracy National Project. Aichholzer and Westholm (2009) used it to evaluate the so-called multimedia dialogue approach to e-Participation in in three cases: Bremen (Germany), Ale (Sweden) and Zwaagwesteinde (Netherlands). Previously Christine Leitner, one of the authors of the European eGovernment 2005-2007 stock of the i2010 eGovernment Action Plan (Millard, 2007<sup>50</sup>) evaluated a number

---

<sup>47</sup> According to Panopoulou et al. (2009) the largest part of the origin of funds in the 255 projects in Europe they identified in 2008 were EU funds: 17% of the 40% identified (almost half).

<sup>48</sup> Macintosh, A. and Whyte, A. (2008). Towards an evaluation framework for eParticipation. *Transforming Government: People, Process & Policy*, 2 (1), pp. 16-30.

<sup>49</sup> DEMO-net, . Lippa, B., Aichholzer, G. et al (2008). eParticipation Evaluation and Impact. DEMO-net booklet 13.3, Bremen, Leeds; retrieved may 11, 2009 from

[http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/Introducing\\_eParticipation\\_DEMO-net\\_booklet\\_1.pdf](http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/Introducing_eParticipation_DEMO-net_booklet_1.pdf)

Aichholzer, G. and Wstholm, H. (2009). Evaluating eParticipation Projects: Practical Examples and Outline of an Evaluation Framework. *European Journal of eParcice*, No. 7, March 2009.

<sup>50</sup> Millard, J., Editor (2007). European eGovernment 2005-2007: Taking stock and good practice and progress towards implementation of the eGovernment Action Plan. Retrieved November 2007 at:

of e-Participation projects in the UK, Sweden, Estonia and the Netherlands with more general criteria such as challenges and barriers, achievements and impacts.

These kind of empirical evaluations show the way. However, they are still in their infancy and as they are not representative general conclusions cannot be drawn from them. Nevertheless we will use them for our own provisional evaluation in the remainder of this report.

## 2. National e-Participation Indexes

Another approach of benchmarking e-Participation, this time for countries as a whole is the construction of eParticipation Indexes. The United Nations E-Government Readiness Reports have published such an index in 2005 and 2008.

For the 2008 report an Index is created that is based on a survey of 21 citizens' informative and participatory services and facilities across 189 countries, in instances in which these services and facilities were online and where data was available. The questions posed to the national services and facilities were grouped under three categories: e-information, e-consultation and e-decision-making. Each country was assessed on a scale of 0-4.

### a. E-Information

The government website offers information on the list of elected officials, government structure, policies and programmes, points of contact, budget, laws and regulations and other information of public interest. Information is disseminated through a number of online tools such as: community networks, blogs, web forums, text messages (micro democracy), newsgroups and e-mail lists.

### b. E-Consultation

The government website provides the tools necessary for e-consultation. It allows citizens to set the agenda for the debate through e-petitioning. The government ensures that its elected officials have a website to communicate directly with their constituents. It maintains an archive of their discussions and provides feedback to citizens.

### c. E-Decision-Making

The government is willing to take into account the e-inputs of citizens into the decisionmaking process. The government informs its citizens on what decisions have been taken based on the consultation process.

The resulting indexes should be considered with great care and in a critical way. Some observers even take them with a grain of salt. The index emphasizes the *supply* of services and facilities on government websites. The citizen initiative is absent. Only the provision of feedback to citizens and the information to citizens on what decisions have been taken based on the consultation process refer to citizen input.

Another important characteristic is that these Indexes only measure at the national level and not at the local, regional and international levels. As compared to the (former) 2005 Index the UK fell from the first to the 25<sup>th</sup> ranking on the e-Participation Index and is now supposed to be equal with Mozambique!. This was mainly due to the migration of e-Participation products and services from its national portal to local government portals. See Annex 2 for the Top 35 countries in 2008.

Eleven countries in this Top 35 come from Europe. That is a relatively larger part than the Americas and Asia comprise. According to this UN report the order of the 11 European countries is as follows: 1. Denmark, 2. France, 3. Estonia, 4. Sweden, 5. Luxembourg, 6. Netherlands, 7. Lithuania 8. United Kingdom, 9. Belgium, 10. Malta and 11. Spain. See Annex 2.

Perhaps more telling is a percentage list of facilities in e-information, e-consultation and e-decision-making offered by countries. This indicates the supply of facilities by governments as measured by the UN. It shows that government-centred e-Participation supply still is a minority phenomenon in the world, even in developed countries with high Internet and PC diffusion rates. It again shows that applications of information and consultation are more widespread than applications of decision making.

#### Countries providing e-Information facilities

	Number of Countries	Per cent
Government provides a clear and explicit written e-participation policy or mission	37	19%
E-mail alerts for e-participation purposes	21	11%
RSS used to update and involve citizens	20	10%
Written calendar listing of upcoming online participation activities	21	11%

#### Countries providing e-Consultation facilities

	Number of Countries	Per cent
Use of polls to solicit citizen opinion	32	17%
Use of chat/instant messaging to solicit citizen opinion	10	5%
Use of weblogs (blogs) to solicit citizen opinion	8	4%
An open web forum for discussing any topic	26	14%
An open online discussion forum specifically for policy issues	23	12%
The content of past discussions in an online forum is posted	22	11%
Formal online consultation process offering a structured way for citizens to comment on government laws or policy	21	11%
Non-formal online consultation mechanism asking for citizen feedback on policies and activities	18	9%

#### Countries providing e-Decision making facilities

	Number of Countries	Per cent
Government commits itself, formally or informally, to incorporating the results of e-participation into e-decision-making	22	11%
Explicit acknowledgement of received e-opinions, e-deliberations and e-interactions	18	9%
Government sends a 'sent receipt' to citizens after receiving input, including a copy of what was received, by whom, time/date received and estimated response time	12	6%
Officials moderate e-deliberations online	6	3%
Government publishes findings/results of citizen opinions, including e-opinions, on website	23	12%

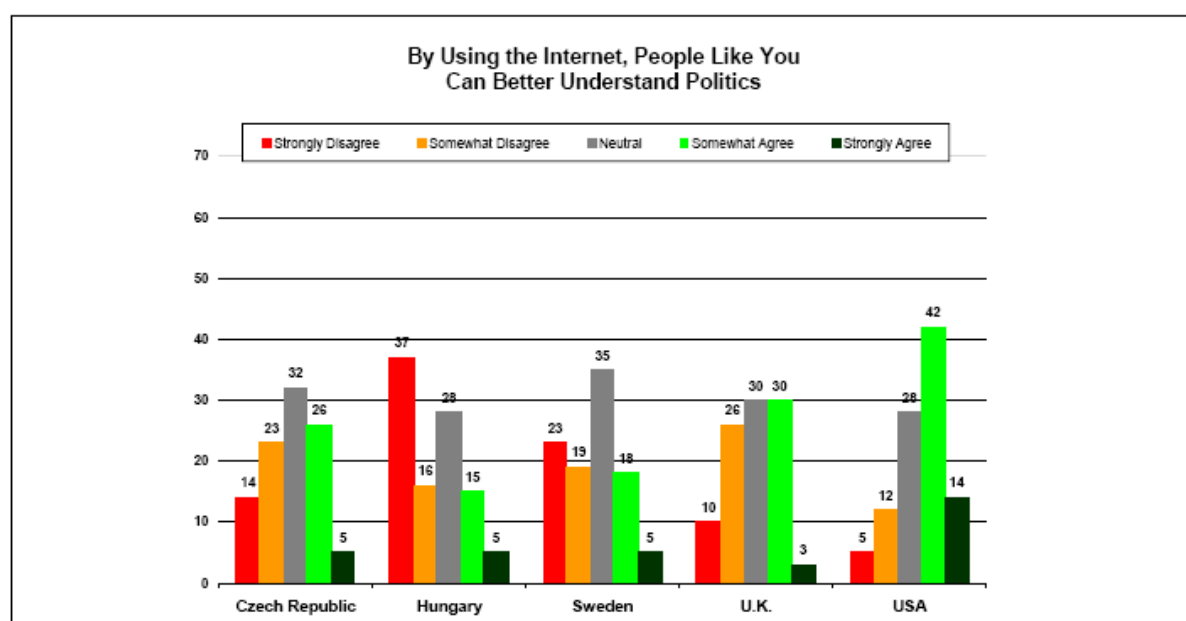
**Table 1. Facilities of e-Participation (information, consultation and decision making offered by 189 countries in 2008. (Source United Nations E-Government Survey 2008)**

#### 4.1.2 Information: better informed policies?

In all applications of e-Participation one of the main goals is to mobilize and exchange all relevant information in society on the issue under consideration in order to improve policy making. This goes both for governments or public administrations and for citizens. Some governments and administrations want to mobilize unknown expertise in society and some also want to know what is going on and what the moods and opinions of citizens are. Often they also want to inform, that is wage information campaigns in the shape of participatory methods on order to be more effective. On their turn some citizens want a (powerful) audience (the government and the administration) to receive their views, needs and complaints. Or they want an audience among fellow citizens that are interested and perhaps want to achieve the same goals.

However, most applications of e-Participation or not (yet) frequently offered by governments (see former paragraph) nor frequently used by citizens. It seems wise to first look for the attitude and motivation citizens have in using tools of ICT as a means to participate and to have more impact in policy making. The results of the World Internet Report discussed in the D3 Topic Report 2 (Report on Findings from Flash Eurobarometer) reveal a rather sceptical European population. We will cite parts of pages 95 and 96 of this report.

There appears to be wide-spread scepticism with regard to the Internet's effect on the behaviour of politicians and public officials as the following Figure 6 shows.



**Figure 6. Perceived Effect of Internet use on Ability to Understand Politics, 2007 (Source: Lengyel and Lorincz based on WIP data 2009.**

In all countries except for the USA more than half of all Internet users “strongly disagree” or “somewhat disagree” with the statement that the Internet “will make public officials care more about what people like you think” (Figure 7). A mere 6% (Hungary) to 22% (USA) agree to the statement (“strongly” or “somewhat”).

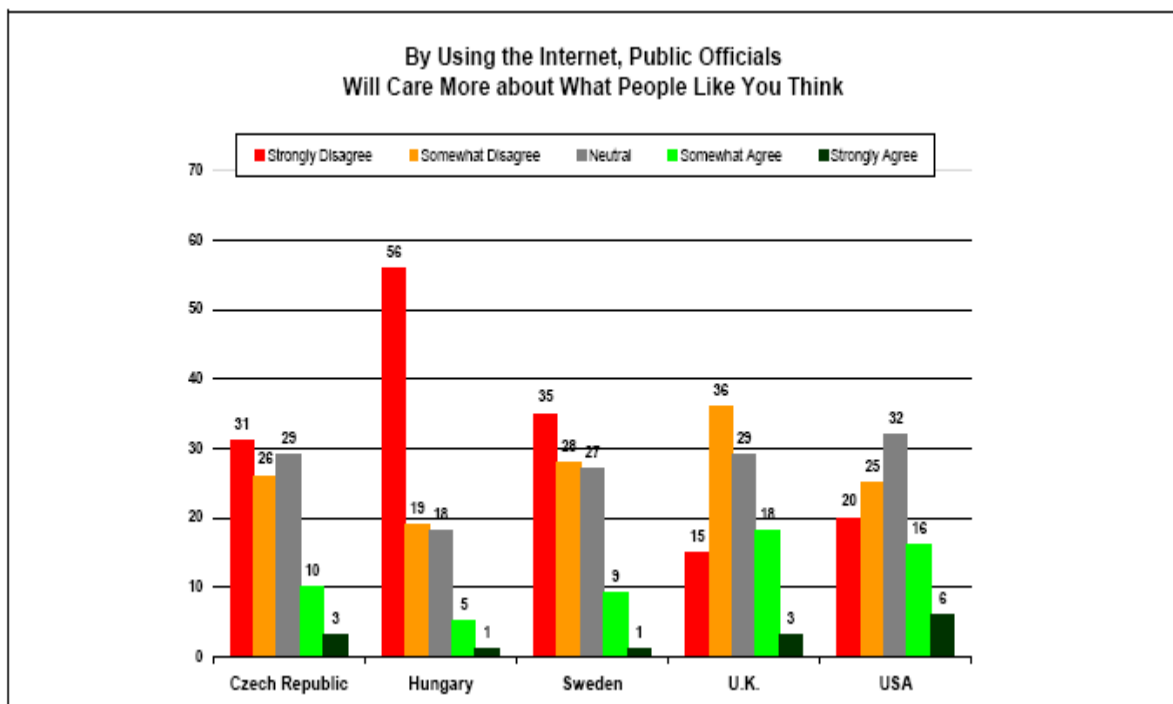


Figure 7. Perceived Effect of Internet use on Public Officials’Attitudes, 2007 (Source: Lengyel and Lorincz based on WIP data 2009). .

Results to a question about the perceived effect of the Internet on the degree to which people have a say about what the government does (Figure 8) are in line with the previous ones. Again, a large share of Internet users appears to be careful if not cynical about the extent to which they will be able to exert an influence on politics in spite of ICT’s potential to enable a more transparent and inclusive policy-making process:

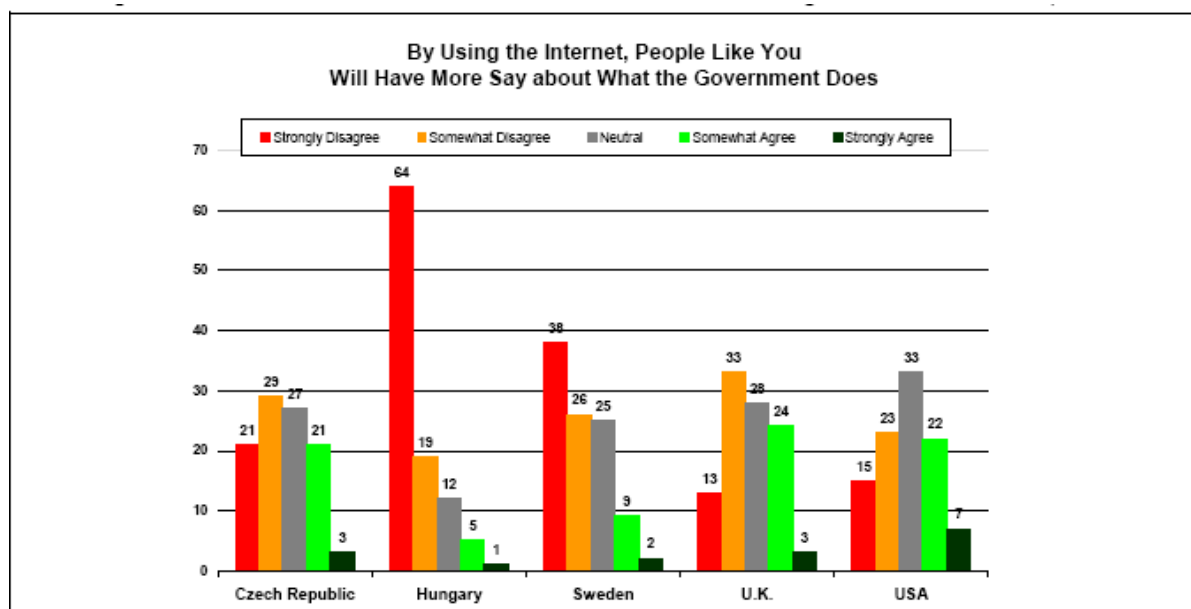


Figure 8. Perceived Effect of Internet use on one’s influence on government behaviour, 2007 (Source: Lengyel and Lorincz based on WIP data 2009). .

In the most recent 2008 TRANSFORM 12 Region Internet User Survey Report D 3) of all perceived effects on regional living conditions the perceived effect of the internet on '*Making one's voice heard in local politics and public life*' receives the lowest positive rates of all conditions (on average 39.5 per cent positive answers)<sup>51</sup>.

Clearly, the crucial factor here is *trust* in government and in current institutional politics and public officials. According to an overwhelming body of literature from social and political science trust in these institutions and their representatives has declined in recent times. The point here is that European citizens are rather sceptical about the potential of ICT to change this. Europeans appear to be more sceptical about this potential than Americans, for instance.

However, there is another side to this. When we take the most recent Flash Eurobarometer we can see that the statement *The Internet has approved the way you deal with public authorities* is approved by 47.8 percent. The statement *The Internet has approved your capability to be informed about current issues* even receives 86.7 percent support<sup>52</sup>. Here we are dealing with e-Government or online public services (not with most forms of e-Participation) and with the Internet as a highly valued new mass medium of information. It may be that these more instrumental or businesslike applications of the Internet in the public domain are much more valued by European citizens than the traditional political applications. Right from the start e-Participation was drawn in the political context of citizen to government relationships, that is to say a democratic perspective. It could be that applications of e-Participation focusing on immediate, daily issues of people that are close to them and that they care about, such as their living environment, community life, health and education have a more promising future than classical political issues. We will come back to this important hypothesis in the conclusions.

Better informed policies by means of e-Participation do not only depend on the interests, motivations and supply of governments and public administrations and the attitudes, motivations and actual demand of citizens, but also on the *quality* of information exchanged. The quantity usually is no problem except for the usual problem of information overload. Not all information exchanged on the Internet is valid and reliable, not even that of governments and public administrations. When exchange means discussion or deliberation the tone and style of the computer-mediated communication practiced also is vital. This can be both constructive and destructive.

#### 4.1.3 *Trust, transparency and openness*

One of the main goals for experiments in e-Participation is the increase or recovery of trust between citizens and governments. We have to conclude that, so far, they have rarely achieved this. When expectations among citizens are raised by governments that offer venues for participation and these expectations are not met they can even lead to the opposite: a decline of trust. Transparency and openness are the basis of trust<sup>53</sup>. Both governments and citizens have to be transparent and open about their intentions and operations. This sounds like a fairly idealistic principle but in fact it is a necessary characteristic for a working communicative relationship and for the creation of mutual trust. Citizens have to see how decisions are made, who takes them and why. They should be able to follow the operations of their representatives. In Section 3 we have seen that the

---

<sup>51</sup> See D3 Statistical report Table 46 on page 97.

<sup>52</sup> See D3 Statistical report Table 24 on page 45.

<sup>53</sup> Millard, J a.o. (2008). eParticipation: overview of Issues and Research Questions, p. 30



applications of e-Participation in the phases of policy execution and evaluation are designed to do this.

Conversely, governments should be able to see what drives citizens. This happens in the applications discussed under the headings of agenda setting, policy preparation, decision making and policy execution in e-Government that is rooted in user registration and a user perspective. Governments have to be confident about the validity and fairness of citizens' input. This is the reason why the security of the applications concerned and, when needed citizen identification is required to prevent fraud and manipulation from the side of particular groups of citizens.

Just one example is sufficient to explain the meaning of trust in e-participation. The scandal on the expenses of MP's in the United Kingdom in 2009, an affair that was discovered, documented and publicized by the traditional mass media (newspapers) after the event, could have been prevented by citizen control sites screening not only the voting behaviour but also the sidelines and expenses of MP's. This scandal was the biggest shock of trust in politicians in modern British history. Henceforward, the registration of sidelines and expenses by political representatives at all levels in citizen control sites can assist in restoring confidence in these representatives.

However, there are legitimate *limits of transparency and openness* in e-Participation. At the side of governments it must be acknowledged that complete exposure and monitoring of all operations of politicians and civil servants would be counterproductive<sup>54</sup>. All negotiations and experiments, situations of uncertainty would be blocked. When government bureaucracies have to work strictly to the rules they will paralyze. They will avoid any risk. On the other hand, citizens (and companies) also have legitimate interests in limiting complete transparency and openness. These are the well-known interests of individual privacy and business confidentiality.

To prevent transparency and openness of becoming idealist notions realistic agreements have to be made for all applications of e-Participation that require the mutual consent of governments and citizens or businesses. They start with explicit rules and regulations, rights and responsibilities specifying the goals and means of these applications. Sometimes they can be assisted by instruments such as appeal procedures, Service Level Agreements and citizens charters<sup>55</sup>

#### 4.1.4 Efficiency: faster and cheaper policy making?

Another impact that is intended or not is increased speed of policy making. For example, a function of e-petitions is to gather support much faster than with traditional means. E-voting could be faster than the traditional polling station; referenda and opinion polls could in theory become instant and frequent events. A final example is e-consultation that will require less time and expenses than a long series of expensive local meetings to reach the same goal.

However, the question always remains whether speed goes at the expense of quality. Another basic question is whether direct inroads of citizen participation do not disturb a policy process that needs time for deliberation and consideration by representatives and administrators.

A final objection comes from e-practice in participation. Ever more experience shows that offline services and communications should not be completely replaced by their online counterparts. It is better to combine online and offline participation venues. This is the point of departure of the so-called *Multimedia Dialogue Approach* that is practiced in several

---

<sup>54</sup> Idem, p. 31.

<sup>55</sup> Idem, p. 31.

countries of North-Western Europe<sup>56</sup>. A multimedia approach certainly is not cheaper and faster; it might be more effective in reaching high quality and representative participation.

## 4.2 Networking

The power of e-Participation is the power of networking between governments and citizens and between citizens themselves. Here the new opportunities of peer-to-peer networking in wiki's, blogs, social networking sites and other social media come forward. What are the opportunities and threats of peer-to-peer networking for participation in official policy making?

The first opportunity is a multiplication of public spheres that gives every citizen the chance to participate in public life and public policy making. The traditional spheres created by the mass media (the press and broadcasting) or those existing long before the advent of the mass media in public meeting places such as markets, streets, parks, pubs and coffee houses are supplemented by all types of communities and online forums on the Internet. Together they create a 'mosaic of public spheres'<sup>57</sup> that are interlinked in all kinds of ways (e.g. TV-programmes and weblogs discussed in a pub).

The second opportunity is the rise of participatory mass media and online civic journalism created by user-generated content. This is the perspective of so-called Web 2.0. In the field of government issues and public policy at large (peer-to-peer) networking offers venues for political and cultural expression (free speech), mass creativity and the mobilization of more knowledge and innovative ideas that rest in society or among the people than ever before.

However, the first threat is a growing complexity and fragmentation of all these public spheres. Any oversight is lost and official policy makers do not know to what public spheres they have to turn to or what they should believe. So, they tend to stick to the traditional public sphere in the mass media they know and have access to. Many policy makers have doubts about the quality of user-generated content on the Internet and about its origin and representativeness.

So, the quality of the products of peer-to-peer networking might be a second threat. Ever larger quantities of output with low quality are produced. Research indicates (see above under online discussions) that without some kind of organization in the form of moderation, editing and filtering the quality of this input in public policy making is low. Internet critic Andrew Keen finds that "on the Net differences between information, advertising and sheer nonsense are blurring"<sup>58</sup>.

For the applications of e-consultation, online discussions and the so-called tools of Web 2.0 (wiki's, social networking etc.) the opportunities of *collective intelligence* have a strong appeal. Collective intelligence is able to create reliable and valid information and decisions in groups<sup>59</sup> when:

---

<sup>56</sup> Kubicek, H., Lippa, B. & Westholm, H. (with cooperation of Kohlrausch, N.) (2007). Medienmix in der lokalen Demokratie. Die Integration von Online-Elementen in Verfahren der Bürgerbeteiligung. Final report to the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, Bremen, retrieved December 3, 2008 from [http://www.ifib.de/projektetail.html?id\\_projekt=135&detail=Medienmix%20in%20der%20lokalen%20Demokratie](http://www.ifib.de/projektetail.html?id_projekt=135&detail=Medienmix%20in%20der%20lokalen%20Demokratie).

<sup>57</sup> John Kean (2000). Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere. In: Kenneth Hacker & Jan van Dijk *Digital Democracy, Issues of theory and practice*. Pp. 70-89. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage

<sup>58</sup> Andrew Keen (2007). *The Cult of the Amateur, How today's Internet is killing our culture*. New York: Double Day/Currency (Random House)

<sup>59</sup> Sunstein, C. (2008) Infotopia

- 1) Those who have the right information are motivated to contribute and those who don't keep silent
- 2) Mechanisms, stimulations and rules (moderators, editors) are available to guide the group process

These conditions explain why Wikipedia information might be right for 95-98%: those wrong are filtered by those right and by experienced editors serving as moderators. When these conditions do not apply *group dynamics* prevail (see the paragraph on online forums above). Experience shows<sup>60</sup> that collective intelligence works better when:

1. The collective does NOT define its own questions (this would lead to insulation);
2. Answers can be evaluated by a simple result (low complexity);
3. The information system which informs the collective is filtered by a quality control mechanism (with individual, independent reviewers and editors).

### 4.3 Empowerment and participation

One of the big issues in the debate around e-Participation is whether the applications discussed increase citizen participation, cause participation to become more unequal or even decrease participation (because some people do not like computer-mediated communication). Most current evidence points in the direction of increasingly unequal participation. This means that those that already participated to a large degree before are participating more in e-Participation. It gives them a new and potentially powerful tool. However those not interested, without sufficient citizen competency and obviously those without Internet access do not participate. Besides physical access the lack of digital skills is the most important problem. For most e-Participation applications a relatively high level of skills is required.

Many e-Participation project evaluations report the over-representation of middle-aged men with higher education. This seems to go less for popular applications such as e-petitions, e-voting guides and citizen control or information sites, while it seems to be stronger in applications requiring a high level of motivation and digital or citizen skills such as online plan consultations and online forums. The first mentioned applications have less flavour of advanced politics and address everyday interests and 'simple' voting decisions in elections. They might be more appropriate for participation among the population at large. These observations at a first glance are in need of confirmation.

However, there is also evidence that these applications are able to draw a larger part of young citizens into participation<sup>61</sup>. This was certainly the case in the E-campaign of Barack Obama, though we don't know to what extent this was caused by the use of new media or by the attractiveness of the candidate to young American voters. In any case, it can be argued that young people will simply expect to be approached with these means by their governments, civil servants and political representatives. If this is true, they have no other choice than to spend more effort in tools of e-Participation.

The importance of inclusion in e-Participation simply cannot be overrated. Currently, e-Participation mainly reaches those that are already engaged, that intend to vote and

---

<sup>60</sup> See summary of literature in Sunstein, *Ibidem*.

<sup>61</sup> See for example Maier-Rabler, U. & Hartwig, Ch. (2007). *ePartizipation - Jugend aktiv: Das IKT-Nutzerverhalten von Salzburger Jugendlichen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von (politisch) partizipativen Formen von Internet und mobiler technischer Kommunikation*. Salzburg: ICT&S Center.

dominate traditional channels of participation. Unfortunately, participation is very much linked to social class. Most political election research indicates that the traditional working classes and ‘under-classes’ of unemployed and migrants have less trust in government and political institutions in general than people from the new and professional middle classes<sup>62</sup>. This goes all the more when government is far away and abstract, such as that at the European level. When the applications of e-Participation mainly reach the middle and higher social classes, as they currently do, they can have a back to front effect: they could increase instead of reduce the gap. For example, the European elections of 2009 have shown a rise of Euro-scepticism and nationalism and a lower voter turnout. So far, no instrument of e-Participation at the European or national level has been able to counter these trends. On the contrary, when the sceptical part of the population would observe that the instruments of e-Participation, that are already perceived to be difficult, are designed and dominated by the professional middle classes and that governments do not really care about the results, they will turn away from them and develop even less trust in government.

#### 4.4 Social capital

Some of the applications discussed above rest more on citizen-to-citizen communication than on citizen-to-government communication. This particularly goes for the applications that are based upon discussion and networking. Some application support (local) community building and long-distance communities-of-interest building. However, some highly individual, service-oriented applications might produce the opposite. For example, the citizen control sites enabling citizens to better choose their neighbourhood to move into might lead to more segmentation or segregation as they draw some people to the ‘better’ neighbourhoods while others remain.

Apart from these issues of community participation the social capital produced by community building is the topic of another domain report.

#### 4.5 Information and Lifelong Learning

As has been claimed several times, information exchange between governments and citizens and between citizens themselves is the prime objective of all views and applications of e-Participation. According to Eurobarometer data European citizens underscore this objective confirming that the Internet has approved their capability to be informed about current issues. This is not only a matter of relatively passive information retrieval. Active contributions of information feedback to governments and public administrations have also become viable. The real new opportunity here is so-called *user-generated content*: the input of all knowledge citizens have in the policy process. Some even speak of a ‘User-generated State’<sup>63</sup>. However, what are the possibilities of user-generated policy content and collective intelligence on the Internet? We have discussed this under paragraph 4.2. Networking. We have seen that the validity and practicability of collective intelligence is conditional. One of these conditions is the availability of a sufficient number of *informed* citizens that have a reasonable level of formal education and that have learned a lot after formal education. Information and strategic digital and civic skills are vital for most forms of e-Participation .

---

<sup>62</sup> The scientific literature shows mixed opinion about this statement. Some claim that the competitive pressures of globalization (for example of migrants and of companies moving abroad) fuel a loss of trust in government among the ‘losers’ in this process. Others observe that the greatest declines of trust are among the better educated and higher social classes as their rising expectations are not met by governments. See R.J. Dalton (2005). The Social Transformation of Trust in Government. *International Review of Sociology*, 15, No. 1.

<sup>63</sup> Ch. Leadbeater and H. Cottam (2008). The User-generated State and Public Services 2.0. Available: <http://www.charlesleadbeater.net/archive/public-services-20.aspx>

The information exchange occurring in e-Participation in policy making will also require new ways to process information and new skills to participate. An important *second order effect* (see Conceptual Framework) of participation with new media is a change in the nature of policy making. This has always been a practice of meetings and face-to-face communication for talkers and organizers. They used verbal skills, management capacities and the art of negotiation. E-Participation is an individual or collective practice of citizens working behind computer screens using many techniques. This requires a routine of technical and symbolic-intellectual skills instead of practical organizational and verbal intellectual skills. What will be the impact: the second replacing the first? Or will they supplement each other and integrate? One thing seems certain: on top of the traditional skills people need to participate as a citizen, such as the knowledge of how the government and public administration work and how to influence this, they will need a number of digital skills that are new to many people, especially the elderly and low educated people that do not use a computer at work.

## 5 Conclusions and Policy implications

### 5.1 Conclusions

As announced before, on account of the lack of conclusive results of scientific e-Participation research and systematic evaluations of e-Participation projects we can only give provisional conclusions of an impact analysis here. All statements listed below can be treated as hypotheses in future research and project evaluations. The conclusions are broadly in line with those of Millard et al. in their 2007 report *European e-Government 2005-2007*. However, conclusions have been extended and sharpened according to the survey of results in this report.

#### EFFECTIVINESS

##### 1. Influence on policy and politics

Currently, scarcely any influence of e-Participation projects or experiments on institutional policy and politics can be observed. Few decisions of government, political representatives and civil servants have changed on account of the input of citizens in e-Participation<sup>64</sup>. The electronic channels of participation used are simply added to the traditional channels. Decision makers doubt the representativeness, surplus value and quality of the input of the new channels. Few decision makers are prepared to accept the direct inroads of e-Participation on their decisions.

##### 2. Policy phases emphasized

E-Participation is most frequently used in the first phases of the policy process: agenda setting and policy preparation. Policy evaluation is a second area, mostly entered on the initiative of citizens (organizations). Governments and public administrations rarely allow entries to the core decision making and policy executing phases. They claim that this does not correspond to our representative political system and the responsibilities of the public

---

<sup>64</sup> The only exception observed in this report is the withdrawal of a road pricing plan by the UK government after petitioning. See e-petitions.

administration. Participation in and user-centred design of online public services in policy execution is still in its infancy.

### 3. E-Government and e-Participation

Thus far, e-Government seems more successful than e-Participation. In opinion polls citizens reveal a positive attitude to the improved electronic information provision of governments and administrations and to the public services of e-Government. Opposed to this, they are sceptical, sometimes even cynical about the Internet's effect on the behaviour of politicians and public officials and about its potential of having more to say in government affairs.

### 4. Closing the Gap?

The main motive for governments and public administration to start experimenting with e-Participation is to close the gap that is perceived to be growing between governments and citizens and to boost the legitimacy of government policy and administrative decisions. So far, this has not occurred. This is both on account of the sceptical attitude of many citizens and of the unconvincing reactions of political representatives and civil servants to the results of e-Participation projects. Research indicates that many citizens are prepared to accept and take part in e-Participation projects provided that governments and administrations clearly take the input of citizens into account and provide feedback to citizens about what they have done with their input in their final decisions<sup>65</sup>. Offering e-Participation opportunities to citizens by governments is a question of a management of expectations<sup>66</sup>: expectations are raised that should not be disappointed. When this happens often, the gap increases instead of being reduced by e-Participation. E-Participation is no technological fix for basic democratic deficits in advanced democracies.

### 5. Government or citizen initiative?

The overview of e-Participation applications in Section 3 raises the suggestion that applications of e-Participation on the initiative of citizens or civilian organizations and new media developers are more successful than those initiated by governments. E-petitions, e-voting guides (made by independent organizations of politically motivated citizens and software developers), e-complaints, e-surveillance and citizen control sites are more popular than online open and plan consultations and official online discussions. Official e-voting also still is in its infancy.

### 6. Incorporation of e-Participation in Government.

One cause for this difference might be the perceived problem of a lack of trust and legitimacy in the relations between governments and citizens. Another might be the trouble governments and public administrations have with the incorporation of the initiatives and results of e-Participation in their regular operations and modes of governance. "Most

---

<sup>65</sup> This corresponds to the results of a large-scale survey in the Netherlands that was conducted for a Ph.-D. Thesis: M. Boedeltje (2009). *Draagvlak door interactief bestuur: fictie of feit?!* (Support of Interactive Governance: fiction or Fact?!). Ph.-D. thesis University of Twente, May 2009. Enschede: University of Twente.

<sup>66</sup> According to modern political theory the perceived gap between governments and citizens is less an issue of bad governments than an issue of governments not being able to meet the rising expectations of increasingly informed and demanding citizens. See Dalton, R.J. (1996). *Citizen politics. Public opinion and political parties in advanced western democracies*. Second edition Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc. and Dalton, R.J. (2005). The social transformation of trust in government. In: *International review of sociology*, vol 15 (1), 133-154.

administrations do not (yet) have mechanisms and capacities in place to cope with a significant increase in participation<sup>67</sup>.

#### *7. Traditional political or everyday life issues?*

The former wave of e-participation experiments during the Internet hype was overloaded with utopian visions of a 'new democracy' or 'teledemocracy'. During that time many European governments waged experiments with online plan consultations and debates. The results were disappointing as they did not draw more citizens into engagement with public affairs and because they rarely led to clear and usable results. With the appearance of Web 2.0 these visions reappeared, this time resting on fundamental changes of the Internet enabling much more active and creative users. These changes are real and important. However, they do not automatically produce active citizens with increased motivation to engage in public or political affairs. As argued before, there is no technological fix for such basic problems of motivation. In this report it was observed and suggested that applications of e-Participation that appeal to the everyday interests of citizens in their own environment might have more appeal to them than traditional issues of politics and public affairs that are abstract and far away. Others support this hypothesis: "Increasingly, the focus appears to be on issues that 'people really care about', such as social security, health, education, environment, and, as mentioned above the very immediate, daily issues"<sup>68</sup>.

### EFFICIENCY

#### *8. Cheaper and Faster Policy Making?*

So far, e-Participation has not resulted in cheaper and faster policy making. The new applications require a lot of investment. A multi-channel approach remains necessary to reach all citizens and to stimulate not only the quality but also the quantity of input. This approach is more expensive than the traditional approach of talks, meetings and print media. When policy making with e-Participation happens faster than before, this does not have to be progress according to all views of democracy. The fast and direct democratic applications of e-voting, e-referenda and e-petitions run the risk of populism according to most views of democracy. They prefer some time for consideration in a representative system.

#### *9. Lack of explicit project goals*

It is difficult to evaluate the efficiency of projects or applications of e-Participation when no explicit goals and public or political motivations are stated in advance. Few want to run the risk of not reaching explicit goals in what essentially still are experiments. However, in this way governments, public administrations and civilian organizations do not sufficiently learn from previous results and are not able to improve applications.

### EDUCATION AND LIFELONG LEARNING

#### *10. Learning effects of e-Participation*

E-Participation might not (yet) have an impact on actual decision making, but probably it is already more effective in producing learning among participants. It is able to contribute to informed citizenship. For example, even when online plan consultations and online debates do not lead to conclusions, decisions or effective policy making they can have a particular

---

<sup>67</sup> Miljard, J. et al (2007). p. 76.

<sup>68</sup> Miljard, J. et al (2007), p. 76

effect on the consciousness and knowledge of participants. In the conditions of lifelong learning this is an important effect that builds future engagement and informed citizenship.

### *11. Mobilizing creativity*

What e-Participation projects are able to do anyway is to mobilize unknown creativity and expertise in society at large, both among professionals and lay people. In e-Participation projects it is often experienced how much knowledge and suggestions for solutions are available among the population. For politicians and civil servants they also serve as a social antenna. In a short period of time they are able to derive what lives among particular populations..

In the extremely complex modern society it simply cannot be assumed anymore that governments and public administrations concentrate all knowledge and creativity. The citizenry has to be mobilized.

## NETWORKING

### *12. The Promises of Collective intelligence*

Collective intelligence in applications of e-Participation on the basis of networking is able to produce 'wise crowds' with great contributions under particular circumstances. When these conditions are not met it can just as well produce 'stupid mobs' of people that run after each other. Main conditions are that mechanisms, stimulations and rules (moderators, editors) are available to guide the group process

### *13. The Primacy of Civil Society in Networking*

Currently, peer-to-peer networking and the production of collective intelligence are more likely to work inside civil society and among individual citizens than between citizens on the one side and governments and public administrations at the other. These horizontal modes of information exchange do not fit into the vertical modes of organization and information processing in governmental hierarchies. Applications of e-Participation that assume an open, free and equal debate between political representatives and citizens run a high risk of failure. What frequently happens is that civil servants run these debates with citizens, more or less on account of governments or political representatives. This is not the role they should play in our representative system with the primacy of politics for representatives and an executive role for civil servants. It is the prime responsibility of political representatives to communicate with citizens.

## EMPOWERMENT AND PARTICIPATION

### *14. The Quantity of Participation*

So far, the number of participators in public policy making has not increased with the transition to e-Participation. Those already participating to a high degree in traditional modes and media of participation also are the frontrunners in e-Participation. This means an overrepresentation of high-educated and already engaged citizens and in some applications an overrepresentation of males. Young people are not drawn more in participatory processes by means of e-Participation, though it has to be emphasized that they probably will participate a lot less when the new media are not used.

As argued before, empowerment happens more via the support of informed citizenship than through the impact on official decision making.



### *15. Digital Skills required*

One of the main problems for a growth of participation in e-Participation is that this requires a number of additional skills added to the traditional skills of citizenship (social skills and knowledge of how the government and decision making work and what rules and regulations hold). These are several types of digital skills: operational skills for computers, browsing and navigation skills for the Internet, information skills for searching information on the Web and strategic skills for using applications such as those of e-Participation for ones own benefit<sup>69</sup>. These skills are very unequally divided among the population. When this does not change by means of better accessible and usable e-Participation tools and by means of more training of digital skills e-Participation will not empower citizens more than old modes of participation.

## **5.2 Policy Suggestions**

Finally, we present a Top 10 of policy suggestions related to the impact analysis in this report and the conclusions above.

### ***1. Clarify goals and means and evaluate systematically***

Most failures of experiments of e-Participation by governments inviting citizens can be ascribed to the omission to clarify the goals and potential outcomes in advance. In this way the effectiveness and efficiency of these experiments cannot be determined. There should be more systematic scientific research of e-Participation. Research should overcome its current descriptive and normative nature and develop both theory and practical improvements. However, the evaluation of all projects with an evaluation framework for e-Participation projects, such as an abbreviated form of the framework in Annex 1, has the highest priority.

### ***2. Clarify rights and responsibilities of e-participation stakeholders***

Often citizens were disappointed when they noticed that representatives, administrators and politicians ignored their input and nothing was done with it because this did not fit into the scheme of responsibilities and regulations. Moreover, goals were not clarified because in fact the application was a matter of 'playing' with fascinating new technologies.

This means that the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders in e-Participation projects should be defined and expressed in advance. "Traditional systems and patterns of governance are increasingly being challenged, so it is important to strike a balance between the rights and responsibilities of stakeholders"<sup>70</sup>.

### ***3. Clarify views of democracy (participation and representation).***

---

<sup>69</sup> van Deursen, A. and van Dijk, J.. (2009). Improving digital skills for the use of online public Information and services. *Government Information Quarterly* 26 (2009), 333-340.

<sup>70</sup> Millard, J. Et al (Eds) (2007). P. 76.

Behind experiments of e-Participation usually hide different views of democracy that are rarely made explicit. This complicates evaluations and leads to disappointments among stakeholders. The problems of e-Participation rarely have a technological background; basically they are political as they rest on particular assumptions about the transformation of governance and about active citizenship. It appears to be difficult to incorporate results of e-Participation in representative systems and the workings of public administrations. So, "Governance and democracy systems need to be re-examined, both supported by and independent of ICT".<sup>71</sup>

#### **4. Adapt government and public administration to incorporate e-Participation; develop transparency and responsiveness.**

The most far-going and difficult to attain policy suggestion is the adaptation of government and public administration structures to enable the input of e-Participation

When governments and administrations will continue to operate with the same closure and rigidity citizens often experience, e-Participation will not work. The responsiveness of governments and transparency of public administrations for citizens will have to be improved.

They will at least have to show that they are listening and provide serious feedback to citizen input.

#### **5. Pay more attention to e-Participation in the area of everyday issues of citizens**

As has been argued before citizen-centred e-Participation is relatively successful. Issues of criminality, community affairs, social security, health, education and the environment are far more popular than traditional political or policy issues of large-scale planning.. They are addressed in citizen control sites and other practical tools for citizens. It is striking that frequently these tools are offered by commercial organizations processing publicly available government data.

#### **6. Tune government initiatives to citizen initiatives**

Section 4 described a conspicuous split between government and citizen initiatives. Governments and administrations will be more effective in practicing e-Participation when they tune their initiatives with those showing real potential and attention among the citizenry. It should be investigated which are the areas and initiatives concerned.

#### **7. Provide reliable and usable information**

Another critical success factor of e-Participation is the reliability and usability of the information exchanged between governments, administrations and citizens. At least the information of governments and administrations should be reliable and accessible or usable by all citizens.

#### **8. Stimulate innovations of hardware and software enabling e-Participation**

---

<sup>71</sup> Millard, J. Et all (Eds.) p. 76

Effective applications of e-Participation do not show up automatically. Many experiments with them are not organizationally and technically sound. Experience has to be built and investments should be made into the hardware and software innovation of e-Participation. They should pay special attention to the accessibility and usability of the software tools for citizen users.

### **9. Develop demand-side strategies for the improvement of e-Government online public services and try user-centred participatory design.**

In the phase of policy execution e-government services of information and transaction should benefit from user experience and user data. So far, a supply-side orientation governs the design and realization of online public services. This requires a benchmarking of the performance of these services from a user or citizen perspective and it requires more participatory design of these services..

### **10. Stimulate the widest participation among the population**

Policies to support e-Participation should always be accompanied by attempts to improve the accessibility and the digital skills required among users.. It is almost a tautology to say that the extension of participation is one of the most crucial factors of success or failure of e-Participation. This should support inclusion instead of reduce it Except for the improvement of digital skills the following five actions are vital to stimulate the widest participation among the population:

- Use techniques to simplify and popularize complex policy issues such as popular language, visualization, simple models, games and simulations;
- Focus on e-Participation applications dealing with everyday issues of citizens;
- Focus on clear issues, even single issues, instead of complex and abstract political discussions, even when they run the risk of supporting populism;
- Link large-scale European and national issues to local issues;
- Link e-Participation applications on a European and national scale to those at a local scale; for example, it is extremely difficult to draw more attention to European or EU issues by European applications of e-Participation only.

## **8. Literature**

Aichholzer, G. and Westholm, H. (2009). Evaluating eParticipation Projects: Practical Examples and Outline of an Evaluation Framework. *European Journal of eParticipation*, No. 7, March 2009.

Arévalo, G., E. Fernández and J. Messía de la Cerda (2006). The state of e-Government and e-Participation in European Regions. *Proceedings of the International Multi-conference on Computing in the Global Information Technology (ICCGI'06)*, IEEE Computer Society.

Arterton, Christopher F. (1987) *Teledemocracy: Can Technology Protect Democracy?* Newbury Park, CA: Sage; Becker, T.L. (1981) 'Teledemocracy: bringing power back to the people', *Futurist*, 15 (6): 6–9; Barber, B.J. (1984) *Strong Democracy: Participatory Politics for a New Age*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

- Avdic, A., Hedström, K, Rose, J and Grönlund, A. (Eds.) (2007). Understanding eParticipation - Contemporary PhD eParticipation research in Europe Örebro: Örebro University Library. Available on www.demo-net
- Barber, Benjamin (1996) *Jihad versus McWorld: How the Planet is both Falling Apart and Coming Together*. New York: Ballantine.;
- Bekkers, V. and Homburg V. (2007). The Myths of EGovernment: Looking beyond the assumptions of a new and better government. *The Information Society* 23 (5), pp. 373-382.
- Boogerman, M. (2006). Enquête bezoekers Stemwijzer, Tilburg: University of Tilburg.
- Botterman, M, Miljard, J., a. o.(2009) *Value for Citizens, A vision of public governance in 2020*. Report for the European Commission, Information Society and Media. Luxemburg: European Communities DOI 10.2759.
- Commission of the European Communities (2006). 'i2010 eGovernment Action Plan: Accelerating eGovernment in Europe'. *Communication From the Commission to the Council, COM(2006) 173 final*. Brussels.
- Dalton, R.J. (1996). Citizen politics. *Public opinion and political parties in advanced western democracies*. Second edition, First edition: 1988. Chatham, New Jersey: Chatham House Publishers, Inc.
- Dekker, P., Hart, J. de and van den Berg, E., Democratie en civil society. In: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, *In het Zicht van de Toekomst*, Den Haag: Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau, 2004, pp.181-219 Dekker P. et al. (2004).
- Ebbers, W. Pieterse, W & Noordman, H. (2008). Electronic government: Rethinking channel management strategies. *Government Information Quarterly*, 25(2), pp. 181-201.
- Giddens, A. (1991) *The Consequences of Modernity*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.
- Goldsmith, S. and Eggers, W. (2004). *Governing by Network, The New Shape of the Public Sector*. Washington D.C.: The Brookings Institution,
- Huijboom, N., van den Broek, T. Frissen, V., Kool, L., Kotterink, B. Meyerhoff Nielsen, M. and Miljard, J. (*forthcoming*, 2009). Key Areas of Social Computing impact in the Public Sector. Final Report (not yet published)
- Inglehart, R. (1999). Postmodernization erodes respect for authority, but increases support for democracy. In: Norris, P. (Ed.). *Critical citizens. Global support for democratic governance*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 236-256.
- Inglehart, R. (1977). *The silent revolution. Changing values and political styles among western politics*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.
- Jankowski and van Selm (2000)
- Kamarck, E. (2007) *The End of Government as We Know It, Making public policy work*. Boulder, London: Lynne Rienner Publishers
- Katz, J. and Rice. R. (2002). *Social Consequences of Internet Use, Access, Involvement, and Interaction*. Cambridge MA, London: The MIT Press and Delli Carpini,
- Keeter, M & S. (2003) 'The Internet and an Informed Citizenry, in D. Anderson, M. Cornfield (eds.) *The Civic Web, Online Politics and Democratic Values*. Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, pp. 129-154
- Kean, John (2000). Structural Transformations of the Public Sphere. In: Kenneth Hacker & Jan van Dijk *Digital Democracy, Issues of theory and practice*. Pp. 70-89. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage
- Keen, Andrew (2007). *The Cult of the Amateur, How today's Internet is killing our culture'*. New York: Double Day/Currency (Random House)
- Kubicek, H., Lippa, B. & Westholm, H. (with cooperation of Kohlrausch, N.) (2007). Medienmix in der lokalen Demokratie. Die Integration von Online-Elementen in Verfahren

- der Bürgerbeteiligung. Final report to the Hans-Böckler-Foundation, Bremen, retrieved December 3, 2008 from [http://www.ifib.de/projektetail.html?id\\_projekt=135&detail=Medienmix%20in%20der%20lokalen%20Demokratie](http://www.ifib.de/projektetail.html?id_projekt=135&detail=Medienmix%20in%20der%20lokalen%20Demokratie).
- Leadbeater, Charles and H. Cottam (2008). *The User-generated State and Public Services 2.0*. <http://www.charlesleadbeater.net/archive/public-services-20.aspx>
- Leadbeater, Charles (2008) *We-think: The Power of Mass Creativity*. Available: <http://www.wethinkthebook.net/home.aspx>
- Lippa, B., Aichholzer, G. et al (2008). *eParticipation Evaluation and Impact*. DEMO-net booklet 13.3, Bremen, Leeds; retrieved may 11, 2009 from [http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/Introducing\\_eParticipation\\_DEMO-net\\_booklet\\_1.pdf](http://www.ifib.de/publikationsdateien/Introducing_eParticipation_DEMO-net_booklet_1.pdf)
- Macintosh, A., Coleman, S., and Lalljee, M. (2005). *E-Methods for Public Engagement: Helping Local Authorities communicate with citizens*. Bristol: Bristol City Council for the Local e-democracy National Project
- Macintosh, Ann (2007). *E-Democracy and e-Participation Research in Europe*. In: H. Chen, L. Brandt, V. Gregg and W. Traummüller (eds.) *Digital Government*. New York: Springer.
- Macintosh, A. (2008). *E-Democracy and E-Participation Research in Europe*. In: H. Chen, L. Brandt et al. (Eds.), *Digital Government*. pp. 85-102. New York: Springer Science.
- Macintosh, A. and Whyte, A. (2008). *Towards an evaluation framework for eParticipation*. *Transforming Government: People, Process & Policy*, 2 (1), pp. 16-30.
- Maier-Rabler, U. & Hartwig, Ch. (2007). *ePartizipation - Jugend aktiv: Das IKT-Nutzerverhalten von Salzburger Jugendlichen mit besonderer Berücksichtigung von (politisch) partizipativen Formen von Internet und mobiler technischer Kommunikation*. Salzburg: ICT&S Center.
- Medaglia, R. *The challenged identity of a field: The state of the art of eParticipation research*. *Information Polity* 12 (2007), pp 169-181.
- Meijer, A. and V. Bekkers (in press). *Citizens2Citizens, Mapping participatory practices on the Internet*. *Electronic Journal of e-Government*, Vol. 6 (2009).
- Millard, J., Editor (2007). *European eGovernment 2005-2007: Taking stock and good practice and progress towards implementation of the eGovernment Action Plan*. Retr. Nov. 2007 at [www.epractice.eu/files/download/awards/ResearchReport2007.pdf](http://www.epractice.eu/files/download/awards/ResearchReport2007.pdf)
- Miljard, J. and other contributors (2008). *eParticipation: overview of issues and research questions*. Deliverable D%.1a to European eParticipation, Study and supply of serviced on the development of eParticipation in the EU. Available at [www.european-participation.eu](http://www.european-participation.eu)
- Norris, P. (2001) *Digital Divide, Civic Engagement, Information Poverty and the Internet worldwide*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press; Rojo,
- Panopoulou, E, Tambouris, E. and Tarabanis K. (2009). *eParticipation Initiatives: How is Europe progressing?* *European Journal of ePractice*, no. 7, March 2009
- Ragsdale, A, and R. (1997) 'Participation in electronic forums', *Telematics and Informatics*, 13 (1): 83-96.
- Rheingold, Howard (1993) *The Virtual Community: Homesteading on the Electronic Frontier*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Roeder, S et al. (2005). 'Public Budget Dialogue- An Innovative Approach to E-Participation'. In M. Böhlen (eds), *TCGOV 2005, LNAI 3416*, pp. 48-56. IFIP 2005.

- Rojo and Ragsdale (2003)
- Sæbø, O., J. Rose and L. Skiftenes Flak (2008). The shape of eParticipation: Characterizing an emerging research area. *Government Information Quarterly* 25, 400-428.
- Sanford, C. and Rose, J. (2007). Characterizing eParticipation. *International Journal of Information Management* 27 (2007), pp. 406-421.
- Sassen, S. (1998). *Globalization and its Discontents*. New York: The New Press.
- Scottish Parliament e-Petitioner: <http://epetitions.scottish.parliament.uk/>
- Shapiro, Andrew (2000). *The Control Revolution: How the Internet is Putting Individuals in Charge and Changing the World We Know*. New York: Public Affairs
- Sunstein, Cas (2008). *Infotopia. How Many Minds Produce Knowledge*. Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press
- ter Hedde, M. and Svensson J. (2009). Online Discussion on Government Websites: Fact and Failure? In. A. Meijer, K. Boomsma and P. Wagenaar, *ICT, Citizens and Governance: After the Hype!* pp. 21-37. Amsterdam, Berlin, Tokio: IOS Press.
- Ter Hedde and Svensson; Jankowski, Nicholas and M. van Selm (2000). The Promise and Practice of Public Debate in Cyberspace. In K. Hacker & J. van Dijk (eds.), *Digital Democracy, Issues of Theory and Practice*. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage;
- van Dijk, J.A.G.M. (1996). Models of democracy behind the design and use of ICT in politics. *The Public/ Javnost III (1)*: 43-56. Jan van Dijk (2000). Models of Democracy and Concepts of Communication. In K. Kacker and J. van Dijk (Eds.) *Digital Democracy. Issues of Theory and Practice*. London, Thousand Oaks CA, New Delhi: Sage.
- van Dijk (1999) Elektronische discussies bij Interactieve Beleidsvorming (Electronic Discussions in Interactive Policy making). *Bestuurskunde* 5 (1999), p. 199-209.
- van Dijk, Jan (2006). *The Network Society*, p. 106. London, Thousand Oaks, New Delhi: Sage.
- Van Dijk, J.A.G.M., Peters, O. & Ebbers, W. (2008). Explaining the acceptance and use of government Internet services: A multivariate analysis of 2006 survey data in the Netherlands. *Government information quarterly*, 25, 379-399. .
- van Dijk, J. and . Winters, A. (2009), *The Perspective of Network Government..* In A.Meijer et al. (eds.) *2008 ICTs, Citizens & Governance: After the Hype!*, Amsterdam and Fairfax VA: IOS Press.

## ANNEX 1 EVALUATION FRAMEWORK FOR E-PARTICIPATION PROJECTS

(Source: Aichholzer, G. and Westholm(2009) and DEMO- net)

### I. PROJECT PERSPECTIVE

#### Project management

Goal clarity; resource planning; responsibilities  
Quality of tool selection and implementation; resource efficiency  
Coordination of online and offline processes

#### Engaging with a wider audience

Promotion measures; outreach  
Incorporation of (multiple) target group perspectives in service design  
Accessibility; inclusiveness; barriers to participation

#### Community development

Participation and networking patterns

#### Obtaining better-informed opinions

Relevance and quality of information  
Learning effects over the participation process

#### Process quality

Gap analysis against standards and good practice  
User and stakeholder identified areas for enhancement  
Integration of online and offline processes  
Harmonisation of work-practices of authority and eParticipation processes

#### Scope of deliberation

Extent of interaction amongst participants; level of involvement  
Extent of rationality and use of arguments

#### Effectiveness

Cost/time effectiveness of processes and structures (e.g. cost savings/time savings in providing, aggregating and evaluating input)

#### Feedback behaviour

Response measures set by project organisers; rates and timeliness of response  
Feedback content and quality; participants' satisfaction with feedback

#### Sustainability

Level of key stakeholder support; provision of resources and maintenance  
Stakeholder perception of continuity barriers  
Level of institutionalisation of education and training for government officials

### II. SOCIO-TECHNICAL PERSPECTIVE

#### Social acceptability

Trust and security

Information is presented accurately,  
completely and reliably

Information users have provided is handled in  
a secure manner

Data handling procedures are in compliance with  
relevant legislation or guidelines

Relevance and legitimacy	Tool meets a purpose relevant to individual users' and community's needs
Content and surrounding processes are relevant to that purpose	
<b>Usefulness</b>	
Accessibility	Level of compliance with Web Accessibility Initiative (WAI) content guidelines is sufficient to serve users with special needs Alternative access over public access points, mobile devices or offline channels is possible Identification of access barriers
Appeal and usage	Public take-up relative to expectations Target users are satisfied with the tool, show interest in using it and willingness to return to the site  Identification of usage barriers Number of users, extent/frequency of their use of the tool
Content clarity	Users understand what the content means in the context of the task or situation
Responsiveness	Tool allows to answer the user's questions quickly and effectively Site provides contact information, FAQs, search functions
Interaction	Tool supports the level of interaction required by the process
Good practice	Level of consistency with current developments, good practice guidelines, standards in the field (e.g. interoperability standards)
<b>Usability</b>	
Navigation and organization	Sufficient and consistent information about users' current position on the site, path taken, and available options
Efficiency and flexibility	Time needed to perform a task  Appropriate short-cuts for doing repetitive or familiar tasks  Adequate fit with variations of individual circumstances
Error recovery	Users can undo previous actions Users are guided effectively on the correct procedure and can continue the task without distraction or hesitation
System security	Level of stability of operation without unintended interruption or periods of

### III. DEMOGRAPHIC PERSPECTIVE

#### Representation

Fit with legal frameworks/legal stipulation for participation procedure  
Integration with 'offline' participation channels  
Fairness of interest representation



**Support of engagement**

- Availability of information on democratic processes and rules of (e-)participation
- Citizens' knowledge about participation opportunities/existing initiatives
- Knowledge increase about democratic processes and rules of (e-)participation
- Participation supply and demand (number of initiatives, access numbers, active membership in networks or interest groups)
- Level of citizen involvement of in identifying subjects of eParticipation

**Transparency and accountability**

- Publication of contributions to/results of participation process
- Public discussion on final results with involved actors
- Transparency on involved actors and responsibilities
- Transparency on how contributions are processed and decisions taken

**Conflict and consensus**

- Identification of "pros and cons"; handling/visibility of minority opinions
- Participation policies (e.g., moderation, etc.)

**Political equality**

- Pluralism, openness of participation process
- Contribution to reduce barriers to participation or barriers to active citizenship

**Community control**

- Participant satisfaction with participation effects

**Table 1; Evaluation criteria Framework for e-Participation Projects**

**(Source: Aichholzer and Westholm (2009) and Macintosh and Whyte (2008))**

## ANNEX 2

	Country	2008 Index	2008 Ranking	2005 Ranking	Change 2008-2005
1	United States	1.0000	1	3	2
2	Republic of Korea	0.9773	2	4	2
3	Denmark	0.9318	3	7	4
4	France	0.9318	3	24	21
5	Australia	0.8864	5	9	4
6	New Zealand	0.7955	6	6	0
7	Mexico	0.7500	7	7	0
8	Estonia	0.7273	8	11	3
9	Sweden	0.6591	9	14	5
10	Singapore	0.6364	10	2	-8
11	Canada	0.6136	11	4	-7
12	Japan	0.6136	11	21	10
13	Luxembourg	0.6136	11	61	50
14	Ukraine	0.5682	14	28	14
15	Jordan	0.5455	15	90	75
16	Netherlands	0.5227	16	10	-6
17	Norway	0.5227	16	26	10
18	Viet Nam	0.5227	16	63	47
19	Bhutan	0.5000	19	90	71
20	Austria	0.4773	20	24	4
21	China	0.4773	20	50	30
22	Lithuania	0.4773	20	69	49
23	Argentina	0.4545	23	36	13
24	Brazil	0.4545	23	18	-5
25	Colombia	0.4318	25	12	-13
26	Mozambique	0.4318	25	30	5

	Country	2008 Index	2008 Ranking	2005 Ranking	Change 2008-2005
27	United Kingdom	0.4318	25	1	-24
28	Belgium	0.4091	28	17	-11
29	Bolivia	0.4091	28	73	45
30	Lebanon	0.4091	28	69	41
31	Switzerland	0.4091	28	22	-6
32	El Salvador	0.3864	32	57	25
33	Malta	0.3864	32	19	-13
34	Costa Rica	0.3636	34	90	56
35	Spain	0.3636	34	73	39